Musicians as Lifelong Learners

32 Biographies

In respectful and fond memory of Ian Horsbrugh, Max van der Kamp and Yonty Solomon

Musicians as Lifelong Learners

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Izhar Elias

Izhar Elias studied the guitar with Ton Terra from the age of seven. He studied at the North Netherlands Conservatoire in Groningen with Erik Westerhof and Remco de Haan (Groningen Guitar Duo), and with Zoran Dukic at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague. In 2002 he finished his master's studies with distinction and was awarded the Nicolaï prize. Elias studied at the Accademia di Studi Superiori l'Ottocento with Carlo Barone in Italy (performance practice of 19th century music). He got interpretation lessons from the violinist Kees Hendrikse. Izhar was awarded first prizes in the National Competition for Young Guitarists, the Princess Christina Competition and the national competition of the Dutch Institute for Young Music Talents. In 1994 he was prize winner in the international competition Printemps de la Guitare. In 1998 he won the second prize in the Tromp Music Competition (Benelux). In 2004 he was finalist in the Aleksander Tansman International Competition of Musical Personalities in Poland. Izhar Elias has given numerous concerts in the Netherlands and abroad, such as Japan, Australia, Italy, Spain, France, Norway, Finland and Estonia. He appeared as soloist with orchestras such as the Residentie Orchestra, the Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Brabant Orchestra, the Orchestra l'Ottocento and the Joven Orquesta Nacional de España. Izhar Elias is specialised in the performance practice of early 19th century music. Regularly he is invited for lectures, masterclasses and concerts at national and international festivals, such as the Holland Festival Early Music and the Darwin International Guitar Festival (Australia). Izhar Elias owns an original Guadagnini guitar from 1812. Furthermore he plays chamber music in several duos and ensembles. In 2005 he toured Australia. Together with the recorder player Erik Bosgraaf he gave concerts and master classes during festivals and concert series in Sydney, Darwin, Canberra, Melbourne and Brisbane. In January 2006 Izhar Elias will give a concert and master classes in the Mahidol University of Bangkok, in Thailand. Recently his CD 'Omaggio a Guadagnini' was released on the Challenge Records label. This CD contains masterpieces from Giuliani, Sor, Mertz en Castelnuovo-Tedesco, performed on a historical 19th century instrument.

I have discovered that there is not only one path to achieve the same goal. Take the example of competitions: it is nonsense that taking part in competitions is the only way to develop an international career. I find it a waste if people get stuck in that. You must be constantly flexible and be aware of the path that fits you personally.

Childhood

Guitarist Izhar Elias was born in Amsterdam on November 11, 1977 as the only child of a visual artist and a psychologist. Izhar's father had his workplace opposite the family house in the Jordaan[1] and because he saw his father painting all the time, Izhar came to know the visual arts in a very early stage of his life. Before his fifth

birthday the family moved to a farmhouse in Ouderkerk aan de Amstel, a characteristic village situated at the Amstel river near the city of Amsterdam. Again Izhar spent a lot of time in his father's workplace, while his mother received clients at home and taught a few days a week at a school in The Hague.

Izhar spent his childhood at the farmhouse and meanwhile went to the Vrije School[2] in Amstelveen. When he was twelve year old, after the sixth grade of school, Izhar went to Grammar School[3] in Amstelveen. Soon after that, at the age of 13, his parents divorced.

Izhar started playing the guitar when he was seven years old. At home there were a lot of instruments, one of the instruments being an old guitar and Izhar spent hours trying them out. Actually his deepest wish was to play the trumpet, but he was too young for that; "it seemed fun at the time, but I am glad that it did not happen, trumpet does not fit me. The guitar was my second choice at that time, but once I started playing it, I immediately felt it was my instrument." At home there was one classical guitar recording which Izhar often listened to.

Izhar went to the community music school in Amstelveen and his guitar teacher was Ton Terra. Izhar was pleased with his teacher; they got along very well: "Ton fostered my enthusiasm and provided me with a good basis." Izhar regards making pupils enthusiastic as the most important quality of a teacher: "When you are not enthusiastic as a teacher the message will not sink in. It is important to experience music in the first place as something beautiful and enjoyable." The guitar lessons went very well: "I never had a severe dip. Ton realised very well what he could not teach me, he could let go and help me make my choices."

A critical year in early adolescence

The year 1991 was very tumultuous for Izhar, and full of contrasts as well. His parents divorced in this period, the same period where he won the first prize in the Young Guitarists Competition and the Princess Christina Competition. At this latter competition Izhar also gained an extra prize, consisting of a performance as a soloist with the Residentie Orchestra in The Hague. At the age of fourteen this happened: Izhar played Rodrigo's *Fantasia para un Gentilhombre* with orchestra. It was an enormous experience for him.

Meanwhile Izhar's private life was very difficult: short after the divorce his mother started a relationship with his guitar teacher. "It was terrible, those two confusing worlds. It felt like my mother had taken my father from me, and now she took my guitar teacher as well! I felt very lonely, especially being an only child." Izhar feels that in the first place he came out of this crisis through his instrument: "my instrument felt like my friend, who would not let me down. It helped."

In total it took Izhar a full year to come to terms with these profound changes. It all resulted in the guitar becoming even more important for him and his love for

playing it strengthening. "I was very successful at that moment and the music did not let me down."

Izhar's parents took up 'co-parenthood'[4], but in practice it worked out differently. Izhar's father remained in Ouderkerk aan de Amstel, he often saw his father, be it by visiting him or by his father visiting Izhar during the week. When Izhar was sixteen years old, his father emigrated to Israel. Again that was not easy, but "it was in the air. His roots are in Israel, with all his family and friends living there. At once I saw him much less. Nowadays I only see him once a year. We have a lot of contact; the internet is a blessing and we got used to it. But still saying goodbye after spending a few weeks together is very difficult."

Choice for the music profession

Around the age of eleven, Izhar already made his choice for a career in music. He remembers the moment: "It was just after I performed in the radio programme 'Für Elise'. I don't know why I decided it just then. I even don't know why I wanted to be a professional musician. I just loved it. I already knew then that what drives me is not especially the guitar, but it is music itself. I can be fed up with the sound of the guitar, but never with music, that is so powerful. I noticed that I was successful, so I felt ready for the profession, out of a strong intrinsic motivation."

Izhar's parents were very supportive, they did not influence his choice, but did stimulate it. "They helped me with every step, which was very important. My father taught me to be disciplined in my practicing, which was very stimulating. My mother was very good in maintaining contacts with the outside world, you need that as well. So they both played an important role." Neither of the parents played an instrument.

Over childhood and especially adolescence music became pivotal in Izhar's life: "during adolescence I felt insecure about myself, and then music became more and more important." It was only classical music Izhar listened to at that time; although he felt that he should listen to pop music in order to 'belong', he never felt attracted to it.

Two musicians having a crucial influence

In the tumultuous period following his parent's divorce, his mother's new love and his big success, when Izhar was still fourteen years old, he met violinist Kees Hendrikse. At that time Kees Hendrikse was just pensioned from the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. The two met in the Vondelpark in Amsterdam, at Queens Day[5], and Hendrikse saw and heard Izhar play his guitar. Hendrikse had taken up sculpting and asked Izhar to pose for him. From that moment on Izhar came to Kees' house, and practiced while Kees made a sculpture of him.

"Hearing me practice, he commented on my music-making, so when the sculpture was finished something had emerged, and actually from then onwards, he

remained my coach. It is a special story. I still visit him from time to time. Musically, he holds a mirror to me. He has no knowledge of guitar technique, so if he had a musical proposal and I would say that I cannot play that, he could not be less bothered. In that way you do not approach the music from the side of technique, but the other way around: you need the technique for the music, so if I want to play something in a certain musical way, I will have to find the technique to realise that."

Izhar describes what he finds so special about Kees Hendrikse, being his subtle musicality, which fits very well to the guitar. "It is very melody directed, I am myself more of a melody man than a harmony man. I learn to phrase, and to pay attention to differences in nuances. I am forced to take care of such details."

To Izhar, Kees is a mentor, currently for already thirteen years; "I change, and he changes with me, so I suppose it has meant growth for him as well. Sometimes it is also difficult, because he has become a sort of musical father for me, so we have to let go of each other as well. Nevertheless I go to him when I feel the urge to do it. I play for him a piece that I have finished practicing. He has lots of time for me, which is wonderful. So actually what we are doing is also sculpting."

Izhar met the Italian guitarist Carlo Barone when he was 15, at a guitar festival at West Dean in Sussex, in the United Kingdom. Izhar had never heard of Barone, and went to the UK to hear the guitarist David Russell. He heard Barone teach and give lectures. "When I heard him and his students Paolo and Claudio perform on these authentic 19th century guitars I was overwhelmed." Izhar describes what he heard as very expressive, and experienced it as a world opening for him: authentic nineteenth century instruments and repertoire, historic performance practice by studying sources. But also the combination of the teacher with his two students appealed to him: "It impressed me, because I was of course in a phase of my life where you look for an idol. Those two students were idols for me, I found it *cool* to be with them. They had something which I do not have: they were *macho*."

From that moment on Izhar would yearly go to Italy to visit Barone in his private academy *Accademia di Studi Superiori l'Ottocento* in Vigevano, in the neighbourhood of Milan. He visited festivals organised by Barone and feels that the birthplace of his later choices for specialisation in this repertoire lies here. "I returned yearly and each time I stayed for a longer period. In the end I played with orchestra during Barone's festival. Izhar would combine Barone's lessons later with his training in the conservatoire, first in Italy during the summer, later through private lessons in Paris, where meanwhile Barone had moved to.

While still in grammar school Izhar's performing career developed. His dream was that of many young musicians: having an international performing career. "I wanted to become as accomplished a musician as possible, and have as many concerts as possible, in many countries." After his concert with the Residentie

Orchestra at the age of fourteen Izhar was approached by 'Effacta Productions', an agency for chamber music. The agency connected him to other gifted young musicians. This meant that he came across playing chamber music: "Actually I am very happy with that, because I met a lot of other gifted musicians and a lot of other repertoire as well." The agency crossing his path was a good thing, because Izhar is not sure whether he would have taken up chamber music otherwise. "I did some chamber music in the community music school, but actually I only had examples of guitarists playing solo. Famous guitarists are only famous amongst guitarists, they very seldom play chamber music."

Study at the conservatoire

In the summer of 1996 Izhar earned his diploma from grammar school and then in September started his study at the North Netherlands Conservatoire in Groningen. His guitar teachers were Remco de Haan and Erik Westerhof, together forming the 'Groningen Guitar Duo'. Izhar started with Remco. He looks back to this period with pleasure: "It was a small school, which was good for me. I felt safe and at the same time I had enough contacts to learn from other students and play together. I did a lot, and I could cope with a lot at the same time."

Nevertheless he felt that he could play very difficult pieces, but with a wrong technique. Izhar calls it tempting for the teachers he had until this moment to let him play difficult pieces, but "actually you skip a step in the basic technique. I really needed a lot of technique, and Remco taught me that. This is the main reason why I came to Groningen. I also loved the way the Groningen Guitar Duo builds on sound and colours, so that was another motivation for my choice."

Izhar feels he had quite a good view about his needs, when entering the conservatoire: "when you leave with pain in your arms after a concert, the bells should start ringing." Since the age of fourteen Izhar hardly heard structural comments on his technique and what went wrong in it, except for perhaps 'a loose remark' during a masterclass. His teachers at the conservatoire worked systematically with him in building a healthy technique.

"They had a plan with their students, and that was what I genuinely needed. Before the period at the conservatoire I sometimes had a very strange posture, while playing. I had pain in my arm, and tried to cope with it in a sensible way. It was really solved with good lessons, it went away and never came back. In this period it was important for me that I still went to Kees (Hendrikse, RS). He kept me focused on the music, which was a good counterpart to the technical study. I could cope with the two sides of my development very well. I had so many musical ideas inside myself. Remco could hold a mirror to me. He could show me that I did not do what I wanted to do musically. So I could control whether the things I wanted to do and did with Kees, actually sounded as such. I had many concerts in my first year at the conservatoire, which forces you of course to communicate everything

you learn as musically as possible. The audience needs to hear a perfect product, so you cannot only jump into your technique. It meant that new technical things which I had to learn sometimes delayed, because on the one hand you need to learn something totally new and step back to that end in order to take time, and on the other hand there were the concerts waiting for me! At grammar school the combination of school and concerts had been very heavy, and once being in the conservatoire I thought that time would be unlimited waiting for me, I had accepted all kinds of concerts and actually I had made things too heavy for myself. The first year was much too busy, in the second year I took on less. You can never know how it would have been if I had not taken on anything. Some teachers feel that their students should always take two years in order to create a proper basis, and not take on any concerts. Maybe I would have learned things quicker then. But on the other hand I gained a lot of experience on the stage. I want to improve myself continuously, so every time I learn something I quickly learn to do it on a stage. I feel it is unnatural to practice for two full years without concerts and then all of a sudden having to prove in a concert everything you learned! So I always remained close to the practice, which was not always the easiest way."

Izhar experienced the compulsory subjects he had to take at the conservatoire as 'ballast'; thinking back he regards them as more important than when he was a student. "An example is harmony. I had to do harmony on the piano, whereas it would have been more logical to do it on the guitar. Doing it on the piano had no context for me. So I battled against it and did this subject reluctantly. Now I think that I could have made the link with the guitar myself, if I had gone to those lessons."

Remco told his students about self-management and promotion. But it did not (yet) appeal to Izhar. "Only later I found out that it is very important. But at that stage you are only interested in trying to be able to make your hours of practicing. You have to do so many things during your study at the conservatoire. If you want to become an outstanding musician, you really have to make hours on your instrument."

Izhar stayed for three years in Groningen, and moved at the beginning of his fourth year to the city of The Hague, remaining a student of the North Netherlands Conservatoire. Meanwhile in Groningen he had lessons of the other member of the Groningen Guitar Duo, Erik Westerhof, and in The Hague, at the Royal Conservatoire, being Groningen's partner institution, he took lessons with Zoran Dukic, who had just been appointed there. Izhar graduated *cum laude* at the North Netherlands Conservatoire in 2000, and two years later he earned his master's diploma at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague, also cum laude.

Izhar's teachers

Izhar claims that in every phase of his development one or more teachers played an

important role. “When I went to the conservatoire I knew exactly what I wanted to learn. I choose my teacher according to this. Starting with Remco was very good for my technique. When I came in Erik’s class in my third year I learned a lot, but when in my fourth year I also got lessons from Zoran (Dukic, RS) and still had lessons with Kees (Hendrikse, RS), it was too much. It did not have to do with the fact that it might be confusing, it was simply a matter of not having enough time to digest everything and practice it adequately.”

Izhar never had any problems with contradiction: “Next to Ton (Terra, RS) I also had other teachers. I am absolutely capable to make independent choices from different opinions. You must be a good ‘lesson taker’, and be independent in that. But in my fourth year I simply heard too much. Between all of this Carlo Barone was also present. And actually I loved thinking over my musical choices in depth.”

Erik and Remco never played for Izhar during the guitar lessons, he regrets that. “Zoran was also kind of lazy with giving practical demonstrations during the lessons, but I knew him as a soloist.” Although he heard Erik and Remco perform as a duo, Izhar had no ambition to be part of a guitar duo: “In chamber music I am always looking for music with more than one soloist, I do not want to become ‘one’ with two guitars. To become ‘one’ as an ensemble is important, but I also want to have my own defined role in that. So in this sense those two teachers were never an example for me.”

Izhar has positive feelings about his time with Ton Terra: “He takes you by the hand, but at the same time he encourages you to discover things yourself, so that you have to take your own risks. He stimulated me to also take lessons with other teachers, that was helpful. In general you can say that he prepared me to become a critical and independent lesson taker.”

Motivation

Music plays such a central role in Izhar’s life that he cannot imagine how his life would look without it. “I get a lot of passion out of it. If I would not have music, I think that I would look for something else in which I can put this passion. I need to be or to become very accomplished in something, or give myself for 100% for it. I need that kind of passion. I cannot do anything just for a little bit. That goes also for things outside music. Everything I take on I want to do very well.” Izhar finds himself ambitious, but he stresses that his motivations and ambitions are in the first place about music, and less about the instrument: “It is a combination of both music and ambition.”

Music is more important than anything: “I cannot miss it, I want to do it very perfectly. I can never be satisfied, and that can be very irritating. Often I leave my own concerts dissatisfied. If the audience is nevertheless enthusiastic, I do believe them of course, but I am used to the fact that they have other expectations, so that softens things for me. I realise myself that sometimes I am simply too much of a

perfectionist. I can enjoy wonderful moments, bad moments I sometimes keep memorizing, but on wonderful moments I absolutely enjoy the music."

Learning to perform on stage as a soloist

"I learned to perform on the stage by looking at examples of soloists, seeing how someone does it. But often I see people 'trying to be a soloist'; it is as if they wear a jacket that does not fit them. They try to imitate someone, performing a personality which they are not themselves. That is wrong. On a stage you absolutely have to be yourself".

In the past Izhar often lacked self-confidence when playing for an audience. This had a lot to do with being very critical about himself. Nowadays he can cope with that much better: "I learned to use the music itself for that; at the moment you start playing, you just dive into the music and forget about yourself and your lack of confidence. I have always had that and I have been able to develop that further, because I felt so motivated for making music and throw myself at it fully. In the past I used to play with my eyes closed for that reason. I did not realise at all how I looked! I don't do that anymore."

Izhar regards being a soloist as an important role. "On the stage you have to show who you are. That is hard, when you are very critical about yourself. So my escape is closing myself from my own criticism by concentrating on the music; by putting the composition in a central place." This just happened. Later Izhar started to reflect on it and use this device on purpose.

During the period at the conservatoire Izhar got much more aware of these issues, where earlier in his development things went more of its own and intuitively: "I became much more aware of myself and of what I was doing musically, which was quite hard, because at first it felt like things started going worse. It is the phase in your life, also leaving home and such things. The question arises of 'Who am I actually?' Part of the study at the conservatoire is about self-awareness. That is very critical; I see a lot of people around me going down musically during their studies at the conservatoire and lose their enthusiasm."

An inquisitive mind: specialisation in 19th C. music

Izhar always had been an inquisitive musician, but felt especially triggered by the example of Carlo Barone to investigate the historic performance practice of 19th century guitar music. He obtained a 19th century guitar from 1812, a Carlo Guadignini guitar, which he uses to perform early 19th century music. Izhar carries out a lot of research in libraries, and looks for unknown (and unpublished) music. He reads a lot of methods written in this era. "I want to fathom these musical styles, at the same time you always know that it remains an interpretation. I want to try and find out how this music was performed in its time." He studies the meaning of notation and only performs from *facsimile* editions or from manuscripts. "Before I

went to the conservatoire I often copied musicians, but during the period at the conservatoire I felt the urge to find out things for myself. I wanted to carry out my own research, and started reading and researching independently, and sometimes came to other conclusions. Everything is relative of course, but you are much better informed, and you learn also about the differences."

Izhar's main research is about the connection of compositions in a musical-rhetorical sense. He compares for example operas of Rossini with guitar concertos of Giuliani and assembles mutual motives, then putting words from the opera over the guitar music. The outcomes are most interesting, he feels: "I discovered that this guitar music is really a language, it changes a lot to my view of the interpretation. It goes further than just a rhetorical instrumental narrative. The Rossini clichés and how they are used, fascinating!" Izhar's research is practice based; he wants to use it for his performances and for his own development, wishing to further develop his vision: "Again: I am in the first place a musician, and in the second place a guitarist."

The often felt discrepancy between knowledge and intuition is not a real issue for Izhar. "I try to combine the two, but sometimes there is a discrepancy. It often gives me the feeling that I do not know enough, on the other hand I sometimes have the feeling that 'I know', but that I am not able to play it. Nevertheless I try as much as possible to perform what I know. It is about the performance in the end, not about the essay, that being only a means to an end."

Learning as a musician

Izhar finds it pleasant to work from clear goals. He will never start practising without considering what he wants to work at. "Of course there is space for intuitive working, but mainly I want to have a grip on my own development, not feeling that things 'happen to me'."

Izhar learns in the first place by playing with other musicians: "I try to learn a lot 'by doing', and next to that are things I learn from, like concerts. I do not visit concerts especially to learn; it just happens. And I do not visit especially concerts of guitarists; on the contrary, it may sound strange, but I am not so quickly inspired by a guitarist."

Izhar can get very inspired by an outstanding string quartet or pianist, like for example Maria Joâo Pires. "Of those examples I learn a lot. Musically such examples are often of a higher standard than the average guitarist's performance. Playing the guitar is technically so complicated, that a lot of performers do not reach the top because of that." Playing chamber music is very important: "you have to communicate, be clear about your musical intentions, you must be together."

An excellent string quartet is inspiring for him, because he is so engaged in musical language. "A string quartet can teach me how to cope with musical language, to make a singing narrative of the music, dealing with the breathing and

pulse. I take a lot of notice of singers and good wind players as well. They teach me much more than a guitarist. A good string quartet often breathes in a natural way; four people feeling the same. I can translate that very well to the guitar; always trying to play freely, both rhythmically and melodically and on the other hand be clear and logical. A string quartet has both these sides, an orchestra is often more cumbersome. A string quartet can be free and 'one' at the same time."

The colour of sound is also an important issue for Izhar: "while interpreting I feel the music for the guitar sounding as a small ensemble. A guitar has lots of possibilities for colouring. I do not listen to the guitar as being a guitar, but as to something which makes music: you can imitate other instruments, and make different colours. There is not one single guitar sound; on the contrary, there are many possibilities. I was always looking for that, already from the very first start in the conservatoire. Kees and Carlo made me aware of this, and Remco taught me subsequently how to do that technically. He was great in that respect, teaching me which movements belonged to that, but also how to file one's nails in order to gain these sounds."

Izhar also learns through listening to different kinds of music, now including jazz music and non-western music as well. He likes listening to folk music, especially to *klezmer* clarinet, which according to him might have to do with his father's Jewish background. He describes himself as an 'open musician, with a curious mind', and at the same time remaining himself: "I know my direction."

Career development: starting early and doing the right things

Actually Izhar's career developed organically from a very early stage, being fourteen years old. Izhar considers it important that his career started so early, having still contacts from many years ago, and gaining a lot of artistic experience and experience on the stage: "During the four years of study at the conservatoire you cannot gain all that precious experience."

His career has actually developed as how he dreamt it, but Izhar feels strongly that it can only be possible when you really want it and do the right things to achieve it. He has strong views on these matters: "I have discovered that there is not only one path to achieve the same goal. Take the example of competitions: it is nonsense that taking part in competitions is the only way to develop an international career. I find it a waste if people get stuck in that. You must be constantly flexible and be aware of the path that fits you personally." Izhar also discovered that 'playing the game' is important. He feels that as a musician you sometimes have to be a bit bold: "There is a lot of favouritism going on, you see it for example in festivals."

Choices

Izhar consciously makes his choices in his career: "You have to make people

understand that they need you, so you have to make sure that you have something to offer. When I started realising this, it enabled me to make the clear choice of specialising myself in 19th century music and chamber music. It is an area in which not many people are accomplished. So you have to offer something that perhaps other people cannot offer. That is a conscious, market-based choice. That is my direction. Fortunately, by chance it is also what I wish to do and of course they need to go together."

Izhar realised that he wanted to make this choice, because he felt he was going into this direction. That was in 2002, just after he had earned his master's diploma. "I then went with Carlo to a guitar festival in Australia, this time as an assistant teacher, and for the first time I noticed what it meant to be in a festival 'on the other side', namely as a teacher. What impressed me most on that occasion were the people who had to offer something individual and unique. For me they are not the average guitarists, as they are generally trained, playing standard competition pieces. There was an Argentinean composer and guitarist, named Maximo Diego Pujol, who played his own Argentinean music together with a string quartet. That was very unique and individual. I can identify myself with that. The same goes for Barone, I could identify with him, because he is also so unique. In such a festival different things are offered that are all authentic from perspectives of different angles and specialities. I then realised that for me performing this 19th century music and being a chamber musician was also my specific thing, so this is how my choice emerged."

Chamber music

Izhar plays a lot of chamber music. He formed a duo with his girlfriend Sarah de Rooij**,** who is a singer and he has duos with flautist Jacqueline van der Zwan, with violinist Quirine Scheffers and with folk guitarist Michiel Hollanders. Working with these different musicians means that he can be involved in very varied programmes. In the forthcoming season Izhar will perform on his 19th century guitar in Antwerp with a string quartet, consisting of authentic instruments. He is pleased to be doing different kinds of chamber music.

Particularly special is his cooperation with the young recorder player Erik Bosgraaf. The two musicians only deal with new music, asking composers to write for them. They already knew each other through their studies in Groningen, but they were actually brought together in 2002 by the organisation of the Princess Christina Competition to perform in Finland and Estonia.

Deciding that they did not want to do any baroque music, but try and generate new music, they asked a Finnish composer to write for them. Meanwhile they have already worked together for three years, and many composers from different countries have written for them. "It is exciting, because in those pieces you see a lot of different cultural elements. We have compositions for modern guitar and several

kinds of recorders. Now we are discovering live electronics and DVD. It is incredible how, with the help of technology, you can make a gigantic ensemble of these two shy instruments!" The two musicians have a lot of influence on the emerging compositions: "We give the composers a lot of ideas, they write improvisatory parts for us as well."

Izhar and Erik sometimes consider composing for their duo themselves, but Izhar is hesitant about it: "I do not want to be one of the many guitar composers making compositions of lesser quality."

Making a living

Izhar can make a living of performing. After his graduation in 2002 he thought it over thoroughly: "I realised that I had to put a lot of effort in my further artistic development if I wanted to reach making a living out of performing. So I made use of the WIK[6], giving me a basic income, for two years. It was my challenge to use this programme as short as possible. But I would not have succeeded in making a living out of performing if after graduation I would have been forced to teach a lot. I would not have had enough time for practice." Now Izhar could practice a lot, and organise his concerts.

Izhar tries to keep finding out about the demand for concerts. He experiences that there is a continuous demand for 'different and unusual' programmes. He still has the chamber music agency offering him concerts in the Netherlands, and concerts abroad he organises himself. "It takes a lot of time and effort, photos, demos, a CD and so on. It also costs a lot of patience".

Izhar learned about these things at the conservatoire, but at that time he realised less the relevance of it. Besides, he feels that he did not learn it in the most practical way. "You don't reach musicians through a theoretical course on business skills and marketing. This is typically a matter of learning by doing. I now learn it by doing it, including screwing it up from time to time."

Izhar's performing career is already substantial for someone of his age. He has seen a lot of changes over the last fourteen years: "I can only speak for the guitar situation, but in the past you would see the big soloists on the stage. Nowadays concerts are aimed more at interesting programmes or themes and less focussed on a performer itself."

He finds it hard to judge about the possibilities for employment: "I have concerts on small stages, like churches, little theatres etc. Financially they have a hard time. It seems to become more and more difficult, and at the same time you see emerging creativity in dealing with that. My career is too short to make a comparison. And besides, I am getting more and more concerts."

Shorter and longer term ambitions

Izhar has several ambitions for the future. Artistically he wants to develop further,

both musically and technically, and explore more colours on his instrument. "I want to continue as I work now, with even more concerts abroad, but I do not want to think 'okay, it is fine like this, so now I will only take on concerts'. I want to have the time for further development and even better have the audience hear what is in my musical mind. That is also why I don't want to teach too much. Last year I skipped a lot of teaching. I have sufficient concerts for an income, so I can afford not to teach. I teach mainly during festivals and masterclasses and I like that."

A longer term ambition of him is to mean something important for the Dutch guitar world. "Something sustained should emerge in the Netherlands, not just having foreign students leaving again after graduation. I would like to teach at a conservatoire, promote guitar concerts and generate a demand for guitar music and guitarists."

Achievements

Izhar feels that the combination of talent and perseverance forms the key to where he is now. "I have a realistic self image, I can dream of ridiculous goals, but the next step will always be that I become realistic about it." Izhar feels satisfied about the fact that he reached the goals he had when starting his study at the conservatoire. "At first it seemed far away; I was afraid that I would not be good enough in networking, because in fact I am quite shy. But the computer and telephone makes things easier." Izhar feels less satisfied about his continuous self-criticism: "Musically and technically I have much more in my mind than what sounds in a concert. That is continuously the case, and it bothers me. This is why I am glad that I am giving myself the time to create space for that. I want to reach the level that exists in my head. I am not yet there, probably I will never get there."

In 1998 Izhar went on a tour to Japan, organised by the Princess Christina Competition, consisting of eleven concerts in a fortnight, including the travelling. That was an enormous experience: "It was my first tour abroad, and I was in the second year of the conservatoire. Every evening I had to give a top performance, no matter how tired I felt. You don't learn in a conservatoire how to cope with that, you only learn it in real life."

Self-management

"During the period at the conservatoire I became much more aware of myself and then I became nervous. I started sleeping badly and became too tired during the concerts. I used to be very nervous just before the concert began, but once it started it fell off me. But meanwhile I was too tired. Now I have overcome that. I am still tense, but in a healthy way. I have overcome it by performing a lot, by accepting being nervous and not to fight it, by telling myself to concentrate on the music, by being very much aware of what I am doing and be practical during the performance, staying focused and concentrated and not allowing the energy to go to

a place where it does not belong. So I keep myself under control. I realised that I had forced myself into things that are not good for me, like taking part in competitions. I took over habits, telling myself that when other successful guitarists achieve things in that way, you have to do it the same way. I thought I had to take part in competitions in order to have work in the future. This atmosphere of achieving, it made me very stressed. People visit concerts because they like to hear concerts and not to judge you on wrong notes. I realised I was focussing on not making mistakes! At a certain moment I let go, telling myself that I do not have to take part in competitions, let alone win them, I can also make a CD, or give concerts. Another thing that I changed was playing by memory. I cannot play well from memory when I am nervous. So I told myself about that as well: 'you don't always have to do it!' So I let go the pressure of a lot of these things, got less nervous and started sleeping again. But I only learned to analyse and to keep control after I had screwed it up from time to time."

Interview held September 16, 2005 in The Hague

1 One of the most characteristic areas of Amsterdam, being much sought after by artists.
2 Literally: Free School, meaning a primary school based on views from anthroposophy.
3 In the Netherlands called: gymnasium.
4 Meaning that after a divorce the child lives part of the week with the one parent, and part of the week with the other parent.
5 April 30, when the Queen's anniversary is celebrated. In the Vondel Park in Amsterdam children play music on that occasion.
6 Wet Inkomen Kunstenaars: Law for Income of Artists: a programme for a maximum of four years that supports young artists to make a living in their career.

Tineke Postma

The young jazz saxophonist Tineke Postma was born in Heerenveen in the province of Frisia in the Netherlands. She graduated 'cum laude' at the Amsterdam Conservatoire in 2003 and since then her career has developed rapidly. Already during her studies Tineke won several prizes. During a part of her master's studies Tineke was an exchange student at the Manhattan School of Music in New York, which turned out to be a very important phase in her artistic development. Tineke is leader of the Tineke Postma Quintet and currently performs all over the world. Her two CDs 'First Avenue' and 'For the Rhythm' are both very successful. Recently Tineke received the prestigious 'MIDEM International Jazz Revelation of the Year 2006', which will be awarded officially to her in May 2006.

I have always sought the confrontation and reflected about my development. I am very critical about myself, which is not always easy, but sometimes I also can have the feeling that I have really played well, and that keeps me going.

It was Tineke's father who sparked off her initial interest in jazz music, by playing records at home. A period of study in New York was crucial and later it was her partner Edoardo who became very influential for Tineke's musical development.

Childhood and school years

Tineke Postma was born in 1978 in Heerenveen, in the province of Frisia in the north of the Netherlands. Both Tineke's parents were teachers and very interested in music; her mother sang in a choir and her grandfather was a passionate amateur clarinettist. Music was certainly there at home. When Tineke was seven years old her parents divorced and from then on she lived alternately with both of them. Tineke feels the divorce did not have a negative impact on her musical development; both parents have always been very supportive and encouraging, and stayed in Heerenveen during her childhood. Tineke has a younger brother who is a graphic designer and a stepsister, who was born after her father remarried.

In school there was a lot of singing in the classroom, and there was theatre as well, something Tineke liked. When she was eight years old she got recorder lessons, which provided a solid basis for her later instrument: the saxophone. "I was always very focused on listening and played along with the radio or a CD."

Tineke's father stimulated her to start learning another wind instrument and because of the wonderful examples she heard at home Tineke felt attracted to the sound of jazz instruments. So at the age of eleven she wanted to start playing the clarinet and borrowed an instrument through the wind band.[1] You automatically became a member of the band when you became a pupil of the music school, but at

that moment there were no clarinets available, so Tineke was given a saxophone. Her teacher at the Heerenveen Music School was Agnes Wildschut. Tineke had private lessons.

Meanwile Tineke went to secondary school[2], which took six years in total. In 1996 she graduated. Tineke liked school and was pleased that she was relatively free to choose her own subjects. She was good in subjects like history and languages. She has no memories of the subject of music in the secondary school.

But music-making was certainly going on outside school. Meanwhile from the age of twelve Tineke also started piano lessons and for a few years she played saxophone in the *fanfare*. She feels it was very useful for her skills of sightreading and ensemble playing, but soon she felt more attracted to jazz music and was not so enthusiastic anymore. "We played mainly marches, which was not so exciting to me. We took part in competitions and had to march through the streets, wearing uniforms, which did not appeal to me either."

Tineke remembers that at a certain moment a jazz band came to play with them, including a saxophone and she loved that style totally. She quit the fanfare when she was 14 years old. She then went to the 'Big Band Friesland', led by Erik Roelofsen and Hubert Heeringa, which rehearsed in the city of Leeuwarden. "That was much more useful for me, it was an excellent basis for my development in jazz."

Jazz became more and more important for her, and the teachers at the music school in Heerenveen were no longer fitting for that. "My tuition was from a classical background, and there was no jazz or improvisation. I learned to read, to count and blow[3] and I did a few theory examinations, which were useful. I bought CDs and focussed myself totally on the saxophone. Cannonball Adderly and Charly Parker were my main examples and I loved practising, I never found it a problem."

A great experience was her performance with jazz saxophonist Candy Dulffer when Tineke was about sixteen years old. "I read in the newspaper that Candy would perform in Leeuwarden. I went there, straight to this hall and asked her if I could join her in the performance. She allowed it and for me it was quite impressive that even the newspaper wrote about it. I cannot imagine doing something like that so easily anymore!"

Pathway to professional education in music

When she was fifteen years old her mother saw an advertisement of the Zwolle Conservatoire and Tineke decided to do an entrance examination for the junior class of the jazz department. "When I auditioned in 1994, the jury found that my affinity with jazz did not show enough, so they advised me to take lessons for one year with a jazz student of the conservatoire, which I did." Tineke's teacher that year was Jacco van Santen. At that time she was still in secondary school and not at all certain if she wanted to study music after graduation. "Music was a great love, jazz was

very alive in me but it was not the only important thing for me. I had no idea what a music study would encompass, but even the word 'conservatoire' contained something magic for me. I was interested and I thought 'who knows'…When in a later stage I *had* made the choice for the conservatoire, I had no thoughts whatsoever about what kind of a future life I would have as a musician; I just liked the study and I apparently had the talent to do it."

The year with Jacco was very good and exciting for Tineke. "He was nice and he taught me quite a lot. Zwolle was further away for me. I lived in Heerenveen and knew Leeuwarden, but that was it, so this travelling was also quite new for me."

Tineke had already had some tuition in music theory at the music school in Heerenveen, but now she had to expand it extensively: "if you want to improvise you need to know about your materials and chord schemes and progressions". Tineke had already tried to improvise by playing with CDs and from books with solo transcriptions, but she feels that Jacco van Santen provided her with a good basis.

In 1995 Tineke came into the junior class in Zwolle with a new teacher, Dick de Graaff. It was a year of hard work, because it was also the year of graduation in secondary school. Upon the time of graduation it was clear to her that she wanted to enter the conservatoire. It was fully her own choice, and her parents were supportive of it. However she was not admitted to Zwolle for the first year; it was felt that she had not done enough in the past year. "I was very serious, got up early in the morning to practice, but at the time of graduation there simply had not been time. In Zwolle I was advised to forget about music. 'Music is nothing for you, you'd better do something else', they literally said. That was depressing and also confrontational, because I wanted it so much! But I played at the Groningen Conservatoire as well, where they did not know me at all. They found me very talented and felt that I needed to be challenged, so I got a place in the first year."

Study at the conservatoire

In 1996 Tineke entered the conservatoire in Groningen. Her teacher was Peter Tjeerdsma. Tineke loved her study but encountered problems as well. "I really had to learn to practice; I found it quite difficult to work in a structured and disciplined way. It was a struggle, but it was okay. I talked with people about how to practice. I got tips that helped. But I now know that the main thing you have to find out is who you are yourself, what you need and what fits you. That needs time, and the process can differ from one person to another. I needed time, many things happened at the same time, I left home as well, for example."

The process of finding one's own identity as a musician and knowing how to work on that took a long time, Tineke feels. "First you must learn to 'own' the

material, establishing a theoretical basis and in order to improvise, listen to music and make connections with other musicians. Since that time I now know how to work on it. Sometimes it is still difficult because you can go through phases in which you find one thing more interesting than the other or when you play with a group that demands other things. So actually it remains an eternal process. When I was in my second and third year of my study things started to dawn on me. In the first years of study you are busy with practising and minding what your teachers say, and that is all influential."

After one year in Groningen Tineke realised she wanted to be in the west of the country and went to the Hilversum Conservatoire, which would later merge with the Amsterdam Conservatoire. The Hilversum Conservatoire had a well-known jazz department at that time. "Ferdinand Povel was teaching the saxophone there and at that time he was *the* teacher for jazz saxophone. Looking back I feel that it was good that I went to Groningen first before going to Hilversum and Amsterdam, because the town is manageable and relatively small. It was agreeable and people were nice. But for me it was a metropole at that time."

Tineke started in September 1997 in Hilversum, again in the first year, which she was pleased with, because it would grant her some more time to develop. She was very satisfied with the lessons of Ferdinand Povel. "He was a good teacher for me, I learned a lot." Later she got lessons from Jasper Blom, who was, according to Tineke, a bit more modernistic in his style. She would not call it *team teaching* what happened, but in general she finds that teachers were easy going about students taking lessons from different colleagues. "I think there is a difference in culture between classical music and jazz music. The relationships between teachers and students are somehow less hierarchical. In the beginning I admired Povel and Blom, both excellent saxophone players, but at some point I just realised I needed somebody else. It is not healthy to remain for a very long time with one and the same teacher, I think; there comes a moment when your teacher has told you everything he has to tell."

Her study went well and in the period of her bachelor's Tineke was nominated for several competitions and even won three prizes. She received her bachelor's diploma in 2001 and immediately after that continued with a master's study.[4]

Her fellow students were important for her: "You have a lot of communication with them, you want to be the best, or they accompany you. The learning environment is very important, there were many good saxophonists in my period of study. Only after graduation I realised how unique such an environment actually is, you meet so many people learning the same things as you…."

Tineke never encountered any physical problems during her study and career, but only in Hilversum during the technique lessons she learned to play with a less tense embouchure, which provided her with better possibilities for playing high notes. "It took quite a while before I could do that."

Period at Manhattan School in New York

An absolute highlight during Tineke's master's study was the five months period she spent as an exchange student at Manhattan School of Music in New York, taking place in the second semester of her first master's year, from the beginning of 2002. Several foundations supported her financially in order to make this exchange happen, amongst which the then existing *Support Scheme for Young Talented Musicians* that selected young musicians in the Netherlands for additional provision for their artistic development.

Tineke regards the period at Manhattan school as pivotal in her development. "The level of the students was incredible high; all the big examples in jazz are around and teach there. New York has all those legendary jazz clubs, really top. It was so inspiring." Tineke feels it was healthy for her to have to start from the very beginning in New York. "Nobody knew me, in Amsterdam I was one of the better saxophonists and had already a lot of positive attention, but in New York there was no such thing!" Tineke found it exciting and motivating. "I realised all the things that had to be done. It is inspiring to be surrounded by excellent musicians, it makes you eager to move on as well."

The saxophonists Tineke studied with were Dick Oatts, David Liebmann and Chris Potter. Oatts and Potter were teachers at Manhattan School. Oatts was Tineke's private teacher, who taught her weekly and Liebmann gave group lessons. Tineke received lessons from Potter on her own initiative; once in New York, she contacted him.

Tineke is very enthusiastic about Dick Oatts: "He is marvellous and a very good pedagogue. I learned a lot from him, not just musically, but concerning everything that has to do with musicianship; how you stand in life as a musician and those kinds of things. And Dave Liebmann is also a wonderful pedagogue; he wrote books about harmony and technical issues, but also about the life skills of a musician. And Potter of course is legendary, the big man of this time, very sympathetic as well, he also taught me a lot."

The programme was extremely demanding: "I was the very first exchange student from Amsterdam to Manhattan School and I was supposed to take the whole programme. A master in Manhattan School is extremely demanding and you are expected to do a lot. So I actually had no time at all to play with people, which afterwards I regretted very much. Now there are more options for choice in these exchange programmes. On the other hand I learned a lot, amongst other things to work very, very hard. In Dutch conservatoires things are much looser, often too loose, in my opinion. In Manhattan School everything was so structured. In Dutch conservatoires the first two years are loaded and busy, but whether it is effective enough I don't know. Also in the Netherlands space is created for your self-development."

Tineke is not certain whether she should regard that as an advantage. "There is nothing wrong with the period at the conservatoire being demanding for a student. After graduation you have more than enough time to develop yourself further. It costs time to develop your own things. When you look at the great musicians you will find that they always were extremely motivated, music was everything to them. You have to work and work, talent alone is not enough. So Manhattan was good for me, others found it too heavy, but it provided me with a real strong basis."

One of the things Tineke started to realise in the period in New York was that she wanted to compose. "All those musicians who taught me wrote (composed, RS) themselves; I used to talk to them about it and then I started to write myself as well. I always thought I could not do it, that it needed a lot of inspiration. But I found out that learning to compose is comparable to learning to play an instrument; you have to practice, and regard rules and theories. I tried it out. In the improvisation lessons we were given material of a scale that fitted to a chord, we were then supposed to write a composition in that mode or style. Every week we would have such an assignment and we would play each other's compositions. So I discovered that composing actually is a trade. It is not a matter of sitting on your bicycle, and suddenly 'have' inspiration. I just have to sit down at the piano and give it a try. That was an eye opener."

Back in Amsterdam, start of career

Coming back from New York Tineke spent another year at the Amsterdam Conservatoire before she graduated in 2003. She had the same teachers, Povel and Blom, as during her bachelor's study. She would not have minded to graduate immediately after the period in New York. "I did not have so much advantage of the school anymore, so I took the opportunity to start building on my own things, and work on composition. I felt that I did not want to play only other people's music. During my bachelor's examination I only played work of other composers, while my master's exam consisted of my own pieces."

Meanwhile Tineke's career started to develop impressively; she again won several prizes and acquired a three year contract for a CD (Munich records). "During my period at the conservatoire I had mainly earned money through playing commercial pop music and a bit of teaching. And sometimes I had a background performance in jazz. I did not have experience with composing and leading my own group. But I got a lot of attention because I won those prizes, so I had to come with something of my own. During my master's period I made a *demo* with my own pieces played together with very good Dutch musicians. I then took ten demos to the yearly IAJE conference[5] in 2003 in Los Angeles and distributed them to several recording companies. Munich Records from the Netherlands were there as well, and when I returned I found a voice mail that they wanted to make a CD. We then recorded those numbers, which was of course wonderful. This offer

happened just before I left for Manhattan School." Many positive reviews showed that the CD, called *First Avenue*, was received very well. In 2003 Tineke graduated *cum laude*.

Looking back at the period at the conservatoire and her teachers

"I had a good time and I found it satisfying. I realise that I was very absorbed in the discovery of myself, into becoming an adult. On the one hand it was good that I started the school (conservatoire, RS) so early, on the other hand I often did not know which direction to take, and how to cope with several things. I lost a lot of time with feeling unconfident. Only the last few years of my study I became more goal directed, knowing better what I wanted to achieve. I think that I was not very effective during the first years. But I don't consider those years as being lost, the process was certainly important."

Tineke is satisfied about the education she received at the conservatoire, but "I think that every jazz student should be able to spend half a year in New York; I think I would have missed something important if I had not done that. There were several subjects I did not take during my last year of the master's in Amsterdam, because I was too busy with my career, but I enjoyed the fact that I was given this space."

In general Tineke thinks that more could be done about mentoring in the conservatoire. "It can be of great help when you have someone who helps you realise which steps you want to take, who encourages you to find out what fits you, and help you become a grown-up musician." At the conservatoire she did not mind the formal environment at all. She felt challenged enough to learn but regards the fact that she was enabled to go to New York as the most important event. "It is important to change environments, and by that, create new impulses."

Tineke feels she was a willing student: "I tend to adapt to the person who is teaching me something, but at some point after graduation it was healthy for me *not* to have a teacher, so that I could do what I wanted, without taking into account what my teachers wanted from me. Of course I should be able to tell my teacher my wishes, and he should be there for me, but in my case, with my character, that is not easy. Now I have changed, I have done a lot, played and toured, made two CDs. I would know now exactly where I would want to go, and what I would want to learn."

Her teachers were different: "Povel is very much into *Bebop* and traditional jazz, and he can explain that very well, but if you want to go another way that might be a problem. Jasper Blom is a more modern player, doing different things. I have good and less good experiences with him. Many jazz musicians actually do not want to teach. Jasper is more a musician than a teacher and at a certain moment you feel that as a student. Not every musician is a good teacher as well. I had many good lessons and there were also periods when he did not feel like teaching, but on the other

hand I also had periods when I did not feel like being taught. Sometimes I came to my lesson unprepared, because I had played a lot. I am not an ideal student; I am more of a student who picks up things here and there, I was not a student who came to her lesson weekly well prepared."

Further development of career

Tineke's own band, the Tineke Postma Quartet (and Quintet when her partner guitarist Edoardo Righini plays along) started in 2002 and has been very successful. The CD Tineke made in 2003 was of great importance for her career. "All of a sudden everything was much more professional." In the USA Tineke's CD even found its way to the jazz charts, being number 11 in the top of the records most played at the radio. It led to many offerings for performances in the Netherlands and a tour in Italy. In 2004 Tineke's second CD, *For the Rhythm*, came out and was, in addition to America, even released one year later in Japan, where she played on this occasion with her formation.

For a while she has had an agent, who is a lawyer and a good friend as well. She has just returned with him from Bremen in Germany, where they visited a music market for jazz, and where they talked to different programmers. Tineke is entrepreneurial enough, but nevertheless likes the fact that this agent is there. "You go to such a market, you bring a few CDs and *bios,* you don't know a soul there and then you think, 'Okay, where am I going to start?' That is not easy. Nobody is waiting for you. I built a real good CV, but still then it is not fun to have to peddle it. It is much easier having your manager there. He can talk enthusiastically about the prizes and awards I have received, I don't have to do it myself, which would make me feel awkward, and which I am afraid would not appear sympathetic. In America musicians can be shameless in that. They really sell themselves, but it is more normal there. In the Netherlands it is always drummed into you that you should not be arrogant and not sell yourself. Sometimes it even goes against your own nature."

Tineke's band is a regular and non regular formation at the same time. "The only disadvantage of playing with very good musicians is that they have a lot to do, and also work with others. So I now actually have a small pool of musicians I like to play with and who sometimes rotate, which is in itself a pity, because you do not build up with the group as much as you would like. But that is how it is. If I would choose to play exclusively with one group with the same musicians, I would not play much. I have to think of my own benefits, so now I have the rule, 'if I can do it, we play'. But I might want to change that, I don't know yet."

One example of someone who is not often available is Tineke's partner Edoardo. "He is very busy. He is in a theatre programme, he teaches at two conservatoires, he has his own music school, so for him I often have to find a musician to replace him."

Composing for the Tineke Postma Quintet

Tineke composes a lot for her quintet. Her first CD was for quartet, and for the second CD she wrote a special programme which included Edoardo on guitar. When she composes she has her specific pool of musicians in mind, and even in the styles she uses, she takes the musical identities of those musicians into account. "It is a real trade. If I have not composed for a while, I need to start all over again. That is hard, and once it gets going again, it goes well."

Tineke listens a lot to music to get inspired. "That is actually crucial. In the very beginning I just give it a try by some sort of copying and finally it becomes something personal. Then you let go of the initial idea again."

She makes a lot of arrangements of existing pieces, "remodelling them into something of my own." She just did that with an Ellington programme, on tour with fifteen concerts, where Ellington's music was 'put into a modern outfit'. That is not just what arranging is about. "It can also be that you want to write down a special atmosphere, something free, something modal. Sometimes I have a full repertoire ready for a concert and then I still need a good opening piece, something *catchy*, so composing and arranging can also be about determining a part of a whole. In jazz you write the melody and chords, sometimes a bass line, if something has to be doubled. But in the end, when it is performed, everyone can turn it into something personal. What you make as a composer is a kind of framework, and within that framework you can improvise. So a particular piece can sound different every evening, and that is the marvellous thing about jazz."

Since September 2005 Tineke teaches one day a week at the Amsterdam Conservatoire. She teaches ensembles in improvising over chord progressions, in a way comparable to how she was taught herself in New York. She likes it very much, it being so close to what she is working on herself. "You have to have a clear image of your explanation and have to be able to reflect about what you are doing. In the past I used to do a lot on intuition; if I would still be doing that I would not be able to explain things to students. I have developed a system for myself that works, and I try to explain that to my students. It makes me think about what I am doing and how I structure my *know-how*."

Next to this she teaches one afternoon at a music school specialising in 'light music' in Naarden-Bussum, a village between Amsterdam and Hilversum.

Learning as a musician and the role of music

Tineke has a lot of different examples in music, ranging from famous jazz musicians like Cannonball Adderly, Wayne Shorter, John Coltrane and Herbie Hancock to Maria Callas. "I listen a lot to geniuses of pop music as well, from rap to hiphop, as long as it is well performed and has depth and expressiveness. I am less concerned with the kind of style."

Tineke learns much from listening to music. She also learns a lot both from playing with people, and practising herself; those two should go together, she feels. "If you want to develop something new it can be crucial to practise a lot during a certain period, but you have to have a clear artistic and creative goal. It is important to make sure you are surrounded by good musicians. It is inspiring, it keeps you focussed. If they are really good musicians they will do their utmost to try and let you sound well when they accompany you."

Sometimes Tineke has periods when she does not practise much, for example when she is on tour, or when she deals with her administrative affairs at home. She then listens a lot to music in order to have 'fresh ears' when she performs again.

She typifies herself as a musician that is creative and has an honest way of playing, by showing her own personality in her performance. "I am not someone locked in a box; I love many different styles, so I don't know which ways I will pursue further. I am in the midst of such a process. *Hard bop* is a style that fits to what I am doing, being the more modern version of the jazz after the Bebop, in which modern styles are influential. Hard bop is also acoustical but more open and with free harmony. I would like to do things which appeal to a broader audience, but I would not want to do to big concessions. I want to stay close to my own experienced musical identity."

> There are marvellous and less thrilling sides of the profession: having your own band, being your own boss, striving to be a solo artist is great, because everything you invest, all the work you do, all the energy you put into it, is purely meant to bring yourself further in music and to be able to play more, to play your own music, to play with good musicians, so you have it all in your own hands. I choose myself who I want to telephone; that is great. It is great that my whole day is about developing myself by obtaining concerts abroad or by practising, or teaching in order to have a bit of regular income. You must keep your goal clearly in your mind, because the journey to reach it can sometimes be quite tiring. I would not want to do anything else than be a musician but sometimes it is hard to have the energy again and again. I am lucky that I have a lot of energy. Sometimes there can be periods in which I have played a lot and when afterwards I look at my agenda I notice that there is not so much ahead, so that actually in this very busy period I should have been engaged in organising concerts for the near future. That is tough, but as long as your aim is there, it is okay. Music is wonderful and important, but it is not just glamour. The road to making music is a practical one, it is a lot of work. The management of the job takes a lot of time and energy, and it is an important part of it. Management was offered as a course at the conservatoire, but I only learned it later, by doing. At the conservatoire I was not considering those things, it was not yet alive in me.

Music is not the only thing which is important for Tineke, "having a good life, a social life, a good relationship with your partner and family, living healthily and be a real member of society is crucial for me as well. You can engage yourself 24 hours a day with writing, playing and teaching music, but that can also be dangerous. It is important to read the newspapers, to read books and do all those things that educate you as the musician you are. If you have not seen anything of the world, or when you are not interested in other arts you are being too restricted."

Tineke feels that her relationship with her partner Edoardo, which has lasted eight years, is a big influence on her. "He is honest and critical, he knows me and his opinion means much to me. I learned a lot that is important from him, things like discipline, being persistent, not being too impulsive. It is good to have such a pal in this male music world."

Being a woman in jazz

At first Tineke did not realise that being a woman in jazz, and especially in a role of leadership could be complicated, but now she does. "In the end the big conclusion is that you have to be yourself, because, no matter how sympathetic they are, the male world is macho and often a bit sexist. It is not in my character to have conflicts, so I used to get out of the way of things that displeased me. But I found out that by doing that you ignore yourself, so I learned to make my point, which is of course not always appreciated. In the end you gain more respect when you are clear. People do not want leaders who do not make themselves clear." Tineke does not know why there are so few female musicians in jazz. "Perhaps because it is hard to fit this life into a life with a family?"

Learning in life and career

Tineke feels that her development as a person largely corresponds with her development as a musician. "If I would be afraid to be central in a big group, you would hear it in my music. Feeling confident is very important for your music-making. In the period of graduation from the conservatoire it was crucial for me that people could hear what I was able to do. Now I realise that making music is absolutely not about that, but that it is all about expressing yourself and not at all about what other people think of your playing. It is about what is good for you. And you don't learn that during your period at the conservatoire, at least I didn't. In that time I was only busy with playing for juries for subsidies, exams and prizes, only showing your abilities. Now I try to get rid of that attitude. Sometimes I listen to myself and then I can still hear someone playing who is not engaged with music-making but with what people will think of her. Solving those things takes time. I realise that now I listen to other musicians with these kinds of ears as well. Why do I like this musician? Because he or she is creative. Period. Technique and vocabulary are means to express yourself but they are never aims in themselves. I have always

sought the confrontation and reflected about my development. I am very critical about myself, which is not always easy, but sometimes I also can have the feeling that I have really played well, and that keeps me going."

Tineke feels that between roughly the age of 18 and today there has been a lot of inner struggle which took time and sometimes left less place for her creative development. "Getting to know yourself; thinking about your choices, what is good for you and what not, costs a lot of energy." She fought hard to gain self-confidence. "Sometimes it was a real drama feeling so small or thinking 'what do they see in me'. There is a lot of jealousy in the jazz world. You are not supposed to have too much success in the Netherlands. That kind of attitude can sometimes restrain me… I need time to bring myself to show myself. I have won many prizes, I graduated *cum laude*, I brought out two CDs and a DVD, my career goes really well. But still then I can be so unconfident about myself, I have to work on that. Now and then I must allow myself to enjoy my success."

The future

Tineke notices that the career opportunities for jazz musicians are not increasing and that at the same time the level of the jazz musicians at the conservatoire gets higher. Subsidies for the arts decrease. "We will have to work hard and be creative, assertive, entrepreneurial and let go of belief in fairy tales."

Tineke's career develops more and more internationally. In October 2005 she played with the drummer Terri Lyne Carrington in the USA, after that she went on tour to Japan and in May 2006 she will go to Deauville in Normandy in order to receive the *MIDEM international Jazz revelations prize*, an award she won with her quintet.

Tineke would like to live and work in New York for a while. She feels it would be good for her development and networking. But she also would like to start a family. "On the long term I want to have a family, play a lot and be on tour. I want to keep developing musically, increase my knowledge, be a good musician while combining this with a family. I realise that I want a lot and I feel that the next years are crucial for my choices and development."

Interview held March 29, 2006 in Amsterdam

1 This was a so called 'fanfare' consisting of brass instruments, saxophones and percussion.
2 HAVO (Higher general secondary school).
3 Meaning: reading notes, counting bars, metre and rhythm and making sound on the saxophone.
4 At that time, and even at this moment, the master's degree does officially not exist (yet) in the Netherlands. The second phase study as it is still called, is comparable to the master, and expectations are that soon, as a result of the outcomes of the Bologna Declaration, official master's degrees will be established in the Netherlands.
5 International Association of Jazz Educators, having a yearly conference in the USA. Tineke was at the 2003 conference because she had won the Sisters in Jazz Award.

Anton Goudsmit

Guitarist Anton Goudsmit graduated 'summa cum laude' at the Amsterdam Conservatoire in 1995. During his studies he started performing regularly with amongst others the Eric Vloeimans quartet (winner Boy Edgar Award), the Barend Middelhoff quartet (winner Middelsee Jazztreffen 1993) and the group Ninsk (winner Middelsee Jazztreffen 1994). Anton Goudsmit has also participated in the popular group 'New Cool Collective' (Big Band) since its foundation. With this group several successful recordings were made, one of which – BIG – was awarded the Edison Award. The expressive guitarist and composer Goudsmit is versatile and innovative, feeling at home with many different styles: improvised music, jazz, pop, funk and crossover. Goudsmit regularly performs in the Netherlands and abroad with different musicians and bands, amongst which Arnold Dooyeweerd, Martijn Vink, Ephraim Trujillo, Jeroen Vierdag, John Engels, Jesse van Ruller, Wolter Wierbos, etc. He also played with great names such as Roy Hargrove, Philip Catherine, John Zorn, Peter Bernstein, Jimmy Haslip and Keith Caputo. Anton Goudsmit is at present one of the most influential guitarists in the Netherlands, sharing the stage with artists like trumpet player Eric Vloeimans and cellist Ernst Reijsiger. In the summer of 2005 he recorded an album with his own work, featuring Efraim Trujillo, saxophone, Jeroen Vierdag, bass guitar and Martijn Vink, drums. At the time of the interview Anton taught the principal study of jazz guitar at the Prince Claus Conservatoire in Groningen.

It is an organic process: emerging groups of generations of youngsters, sometimes mixed with older musicians who have a mentoring role, imbued with the spirit of the times, fusing together. Such communities need to be found in conservatoires.

An after-second-world-war child

Born in 1967 in Haarlem, Anton Goudsmit is the third child in a family of four children, a daughter and three sons. At the time of the interview his older brother is confined to a wheel chair due to the illness MS and his parents and sister live with his brother and family in a big house in the countryside of the Netherlands. Anton lives with his wife Ellen and their ten year old son and three year old daughter in Amsterdam.

Anton's grandparents (from his father's side) were both professional pianists. His grandfather Jozef Goudsmit was a very accomplished pianist, next to solo performances he played with the violinist Jo Juda. His grandmother taught at the Amsterdam Conservatoire.[1] They survived the Second World War, thanks to the fact that his grandmother was not Jewish and his grandfather being 'only' half Jewish. His grandfather's father and sister were murdered during the war and,

although he had been on the edge of an international break-through just before the war started, once the war was over, Anton's grandfather did not want to perform anymore.

Anton never was conscious about the fact that his grandparents were professional musicians; he found out about it only after he graduated from the conservatoire, through reading letters that still existed.

Anton's father did not want to have anything to do with music; he chose to read Law. Anton thinks that his father must have been shocked by all the consequences of the war, amongst which the fact that many (Jewish) people were financially broke. The war was taboo: his father never spoke about it or about his youth. Anton had to find out everything by himself, mainly through the above-mentioned correspondence, in which he read a lot about how bad the times were for musicians. When he asked his parents about this it seemed to him that they avoided the subject. "I had the feeling that my father had a heavy inferiority complex and a post-second-world-war-urge to build up his finances." Anton thinks that the fact that the (remaining) family lost all their assets through the war might play a role in this. "The post-war generation only worked, worked and worked."

Anton has never known his grandfather, but has known his grandmother. The grandfather-pianist did not seem fit to run the family capital, so Anton sees his father's view as a kind of anti-reaction to a professional life in music. He realises that his father feels vulnerable and hence can hardly listen to music. "My father sometimes listens to music, to this very emotional classical music, like slow movements of composers like Rachmaninov, especially when he drives the car. He pushes the gas pedal further as the music gets more emotional. I can't stand that."

Anton's father read Law, amongst which also financial law, and wrote a PhD on 'leasing' at Amsterdam University. "This was what he later worked out while starting a company. He was enterprising, a businessman, and very successful." Anton describes his mother as a 'woman of feeling'. She took care of the children. "She was a talented dancer; she is a sensitive and extravert woman." Anton's mother came from a rich family (the Eysbouts bell-foundry in Asten) in the south of the Netherlands, whereas he describes his father as a 'city boy with a Jewish background'. He feels most connected to his father, and remains utterly intrigued by his mysterious grandfather. None of the other children from the family became professional musicians.

Youth and school time

At the age of eight, Anton moved with his family from Haarlem to Laren. There he continued the primary school. At the 'Gooise school' he got a friend, Jampie (Jan Michael) with whom the friendship would remain till the age of approximately 15. Anton regards Jampie's mother as very influential in his education. "She was a hippie, a crazy woman, called Annemarie. She had travelled the whole world

during her first marriage and was now remarried." Anton calls it an 'outside educational influence'. At Jampie's house things were cheerful and cozy. Annemarie listened to Jimi Hendrix and Herman Brood. "The house was a little bit dirty, American strips in the loo, and there was also a crazy uncle, called Pancho. There was a rural hippie-like American atmosphere, I loved it."

After primary school Anton went to secondary school[2], the Nieuwe Lyceum in Hilversum, but there his behaviour was conceived as that of an *enfant terrible*. "They kicked me out when I was in the third grade, because I was sent out of the lessons too often. Anyway, this Nieuwe Lyceum was a posh school for spoilt children, where teachers were bullied by the pupils until they left their jobs." He then went to another secondary school 'Laar en Berg' in Laren, where he started again in the third grade, but he had hard times there, especially given by the teachers. "There was an enormous polarisation between '*kakkers*' and '*dijkers*'[3] in this area.[4] I was a *removed* boy from a middle class school."

Anton was nearly kicked out of his new school as well. "The complaint was: 'Anton distracts people even when he does nothing', so they could not hold that against me." In 1986 he graduated from secondary school, and then moved to Amsterdam to read Law.

Encountering music

During childhood Anton's parents did not encourage music-making. Nevertheless he fell already for the guitar at a young age through his friendship with Jampie: "I fell for the sound. Jampie's parents had a kind of old banjo, and I simply *had* to touch it all the time." He heard a lot of guitar music on the radio. When Anton was twelve and in the first grade of secondary school, there was an Egyptian boy in his class, who played the guitar. "I was not very interested in playing an instrument. But when I heard that this boy played along with the radio, I got excited. I also wanted a guitar and play *Elvis* and *Rock & Roll*." He then received a cheap acoustic guitar. "Then I heard these *rock solos* on the radio and I wanted an electric guitar!" Again his parents got him one. He was then fourteen years old. "It was a very beautiful one, a real Gibson, a 'plank with little ears'."

Erik Borgers became his teacher. Anton describes him as a 'would-be boy needing a lot of attention'. Erik came, sometimes daily, to Anton's house and he regarded him at that time as his best friend. Erik was about 26 years old, and Anton fourteen. Anton describes Erik's lessons as follows: "I accompanied him, I learned standard chords and just messed about. I wanted to play percussion-like, I found that *punky*."

Where Rock & Roll was important for Anton at the age of age twelve, now it turned to 'black music'. "I did a lot with Erik, he lived in Huizen, together with other pop musicians. He took me in his car, to his house, to music shops. It was an important time. Of course the lessons were not really good, but nevertheless a lot

was happening." But soon Anton got critical: "Sometimes Erik would make a song, I would listen to it and then ponder the chords, which sounded strange and not good. I did have an opinion after all. I was very busy with the guitar, but in an informal way."

Anton had lessons with Erik for about three years. Things went disastrously wrong when Erik fell in love with Anton's sister. "I found that terrible, he felt like a traitor to me and after that I did not want to have anything to do with him anymore."

After that Anton took sporadically lessons with Maarten van der Grinten. "Then I fell in love and lost my interest in music." Girls were enormously distracting and love affairs, as well as his work in school, playing hockey and going out, absorbed him. Anton describes getting his own little garden house at his parents' place. "That was because of my morning mood but of course my friends could also come and go whenever they wanted. This life went on and on till I went to Amsterdam."

Shift of studies in Amsterdam

Anton graduated from the Atheneum in 1986 and after the summer went to Amsterdam to read Law. "I had no better idea, and law was a broad study you could do a lot with." The first year went quite well; the second year 'well enough', but then he stopped doing anything in his studies.

"One time I used LSD. Amongst many other things it sort of gave me an eye opener: I thought that I must be crazy not to choose what I want the most. I felt I had to choose something that enabled me to make something of my life. Do something I enjoy. Hence the choice of music. I had never realised before that time, that I could make my profession in music."

Anton decided this within a short span of time and in 1988 did an entrance examination at the Amsterdam Conservatoire. He was admitted to the junior class of the Department of Improvised Music.[5] At the same time he entered Amsterdam University again, now in the department of Musicology, in order to prepare his ear training for the conservatoire.

One year later Anton was admitted in the first year to study with the guitarist Peter Mingaars at the Amsterdam Conservatoire, where he finished his studies Performing Musician[6] in 1996 with a 10 ('excellent').

Anton's parents were in the end very satisfied with his choice for music as a profession although they had advised him not to pursue it. "They literally said 'you will be too old, people will laugh at you'. My mother does not remember having said it. My father was a bit disappointed because he had his hopes on me, being the least lazy one of the sons. His view of success turned over. Now, being older, they are proud of me. They discovered that it is more important to be happy than having a lot of possessions." Financial security was, according to Anton, a big motivation

for his parents to advise him against becoming a professional musician.

Notwithstanding the fact that his family is now proud of him, Anton is not in favour of family members visiting his concerts. It distracts him too much. "My mother interferes just before I have to play, she means well, but I cannot cope with it."

Motivation

Anton describes his motivation for playing the jazz guitar professionally as 'simplistic'. "The only thing you have to give account for is such a simple instrument. Your relation with society is captured in something honest like a piece of wood with strings. That, in a complicated society, appeals to me. I must do my music as well as possible. It is very simple; I do not need to make profit or whatsoever. I just want to be as good as possible on that instrument." Anton states that his motivation exists both because of his passion for music as well as of his assertiveness and ambition.[7]

Learning in the conservatoire, major influences

The period at the conservatoire was very intensive and inspiring. Most of the things Anton learned at the conservatoire happened in an informal way, especially by working with his fellow students. "You must prepare well, get practical experience, learn to speed up, everything must be fit for purpose. Passion and discipline, learning by doing, that is important."

The double bass player Arnold Dooyeweerd was one of the people Anton met at the conservatoire. He was a teacher there and turned out to be very influential. "We chatted a lot about music." What appealed to Anton in Arnold Dooyeweerd was "him being close to himself. He always talked about 'fun music' and about 'the right button' or that 'something might be deadly', by which he meant the very different kind of sounds you could use in a band; like something beautiful, something harmonically special, or in a pastel colour. That is what he meant by 'the buttons'. His workshops were about the discovery of those buttons."

There was a difference in generation, so Arnold, being very experienced, had a lot to offer to Anton. "We played, performed, improvised. He is a good improviser." Anton played a lot with Arnold and continued it after his studies at the conservatoire. He describes Dooyeweerd as 'someone who is sensitive to musicians that are ambitious and play as if their lives depend on it'.

The biggest influence however during the period at the conservatoire came, as stated earlier, from Anton's fellow students. The saxophonist Barend Middelhoff for example, already gave a lot of concerts, and Anton jumped into the deep end with him. They played 'Sonny Rollins-like' repertoire. In his third year Anton became member of the quartet of the trumpet player Eric Vloeimans. Other members of the quartet were Arnold Dooyeweerd and Pieter Bast on drums. This meant playing a

lot. At a certain moment Anton gave, still being a student in the conservatoire, 70 concerts per year.

The main influence of fellow students consisted of beautifying one's standard repertoire. "In a band you played so to speak your own music." Anton has always preferred to play in bands with people who compose the work themselves.

Anton has a marked view on teachers in conservatoires: "A teacher is a necessary obstacle. A gatekeeper. He has the key of the door or is standing in the opening of the door and you have to pass it. That is the system. That is not at all about a role model. My teacher (of the principal study, RS) was somebody who taught you the inevitable things. He was a good teacher. But, what can such a person teach you *really* in jazz? My teacher told me standard stories. I think that unconsciously, you choose your own teachers. You learn in the first place yourself, not in those 32 little lessons per year."

Artistic development

While copying is an often used learning device in jazz and pop music, Anton never did it much, let alone in a disciplined way. "Sometimes something can give me an idea for an atmosphere, for example during a concert a fragment of an emerging idea can occur to me. It can happen at a very unexpected moment. Later I work it out." Anton is never systematically sorting out those kinds of ideas; they consist merely of 'vague memories, transforming all the time'. Sometimes he can work on them endlessly.

(Jazz) Pianists are influential for him in their sound development. Anton has a special gift for sound and colour, although he describes it as being very simple. "I never use electronics. Actually I always play without effects; I derive them solely from my guitar. Colleagues often turn to electronic music because of the sound. I do not like that music. I hate chemical atmospheres. I want to explore everything from the guitar. And it will take a long time before I am finished with that." Anton always plays jazz, he is hardly influenced by non-western music, and if it is the case, mainly by rhythms.

Classical music has always been far away. "I do not know it enough. I don't resist it, it is more that I have never been in contact with it. Nowadays I meet more and more classical musicians and it surprises me that they are so much fun. It is of course a totally different world. I could never play in an orchestra: doing exactly what is written and what someone wants me to do, that is nothing for me." Stravinsky's *Sacre du Printemps* is for him an outstanding example of 'marvellous music'.

Main musical examples for Anton were Jimi Hendrix in his youth, and later on the group *Weather Report* and Miles Davis. During the period at the conservatoire it

were guitarists like Pat Metheny and John Scofield. Now it is Frank Moebus, a German guitarist. Anton describes what appeals so much to him: "Moebus is very productive and improvises in an intelligent way with a bass clarinettist and a drummer. Their starting point is just a sound. The mixture of bass clarinet and guitar forms the character of the sound and colour and they start to improvise from a theme, leading to little structures. They take fragments from the theme and thus form a conversation. Or they improvise on a rhythmic theme. It is actually very simple, playing together and having a real good sound together is everything."

Groove design and improvisation

Although he writes wonderful compositions, Anton refuses to regard himself as a composer. He prefers the word 'groove design' instead of 'composition'. "Composing is like constructing with lego. It is groove design, band design, having rhythmical ideas; sometimes I make 'designed rhythms', for example symmetrically."

According to Anton, a real composer has music in his mind and can express that in different casts. "It is a lot of messing about, and when you get jammed and it does not fit… it is like meccano! I do it on my own and play it on the guitar and then I write it down. That is not real composing. A real composer must be able to imagine sound. That kind of imagining ability is defining, being really creative."

Composing, or rather groove design takes place in the ensemble as well: having the material available and then transforming it into something of your own and make yourself indispensable. "I then compose my own guitar part. Thinking together is wonderful, like in the quartet with Vloeimans (the previously mentioned jazz trumpet player, RS). It is a composition you shape together, I make a guitar part for the thematic part. You design angular points, like in improvisations, you establish when you join or don't join the group." Verbal deliberation is not necessary, Anton finds, "you hear automatically if it sounds not good enough." Hence groove design in an ensemble is about tacit music-making without too much talking.

Nevertheless Anton finds that in general groups rehearse not often enough, due to lack of time of the musicians; he regards that as a bad situation. "It means that you are forced to repeat things instead of being innovative and develop new work."

Anton's own group, next to him consisting of Efraim Trujillo, saxophone, Martijn Vink, drums and Jeroen Vierdag, double bass, is a sheer joy in this respect. "I am not the only feeder, everyone composes and tries out. We develop gigantic material and form an organic kind of group. That is the most wonderful thing that can happen." Nevertheless it is often hard for Anton to feel satisfied with his own work: "When in my view even a tiny little thing is lacking to my 'composition' I do not want to perform it. My shortcoming is that I am awfully critical about myself. I want to do my stuff really well, I work extremely hard for that."

This summer he recorded an album with his own work, featuring his above-mentioned colleagues. It was a live concert on the roof of 'Nemo'[8] in Amsterdam, all with his own compositions. "I have been cutting back 110 minutes of music to 50 minutes, and the rare event has occurred that I am really satisfied and pleased with the recording."

Views on career
Music plays a very critical role in Anton's life, although there are fluctuations in intensity. Together with the life with his wife and children it forms the crux of his life. Anton regards himself very lucky that he has, until this very moment, always been fortunate in his career by having a lot of opportunities to play and do very different things. Although it is not always uncomplicated: "I am a 'follower'; I was always sitting in little carts. I was lucky to have the chance to sit in them. I was never concerned about the question if I like it myself, but if others like it. That gives an extra drive to prepare yourself. It must be good! Actually I am always extremely well prepared." On the other hand Anton indicates that he does not easily accept work. "I also suffer a bit from fear of failure. Because deep in my heart I want to steal the show. Ambition indeed. I want to be noticed, I am sensitive to big applause."

Anton is satisfied with the recognition he has hitherto received for his talent. He is the least satisfied with the fact that he finds himself lazy: "If I work for a concert I work really hard, but if there is not something coming up that day I can be truly lazy and spend my mornings on nothing. I hate that about myself. It can only be prevented from outside, by need to work."

The contexts of the professional music world and the contents of it change continuously. But it does not frighten him. "The shifts happen of one's own accord. I am not pessimistic about the changes. What always remains is the social responsibility of the musician. Holland becomes small. A lot falls out. Real musicians become scarce. Sometimes there is not enough going on. A lot is changing, but these fluctuations are there all the time. It does not scare me for a second. Many things have changed in the possibilities in the profession, it is important to adapt to that. You have to be flexible and remain loyal to yourself at the same time. You have to balance that." Anton recounts that his colleagues in the Bimhuis[9] were annoyed with him because he played in 'a commercial fake band' during the European championship for football in Portugal in 2004. "It amused me that they got so hot under the collar about it; I just liked doing it!"

With the *New Cool Collective* a new CD came out recently, which is very successful. It pleases Anton that through this recording with pop music he can reach a wider audience.

Anton does not wish to describe himself as 'enterprising', rather as 'active'. "I am not an entrepreneur, nor someone who writes applications for subsidies." Anton feels no need for a personal manager either. Nevertheless he feels a constant need to start new things.

Lifelong learning

"I need incentives. Music-making is a group event for me. That is why you never are a composer in the traditional sense of the word. It is an organic process: emerging groups of generations of youngsters, sometimes mixed with older musicians who have a mentoring role, imbued with the spirit of the times, fusing together. Such communities need to be found in conservatoires!"

Anton describes his own lifelong learning as the constant search for new influences. "At present I am choosing my pathway. I am very intuitive in my choices. I try to communicate better and give a lot of thought to that."

He has decided to stop teaching. "That decision has to do with the fact that I need new input. I do not know how I will feel about quitting it. Of course you keep in shape by teaching and playing with your students, but I want to grow and that does not happen through my students. I give it up because my own development came to an end. 'I teach at a conservatoire'; that gives a sort of relaxation that is not yet allowed to exist for me. It is allowed in perhaps ten years. I do not yet want to be the gatekeeper. I cannot yet enjoy that."

Interviews held June 1 and 8, 2005 in Groningen

1 At that time called the 'Muzieklyceum'.
2 'Atheneum' with Latin, consisting of six grades.
3 'Middle class' and 'lower class'.
4 In the Netherlands this area is called 'Het Gooi'.
5 Nowadays called Jazz Department.
6 Currently a master's degree.
7 Anton uses the Dutch word 'geldingsdrang'.
8 Museum of Science.
9 Amsterdam's most important jazz stage.

Yuri Honing

Saxophonist Yuri Honing entered the jazz scene in the early nineties. He started playing amongst other things with his famous Yuri Honing Trio - which celebrated its 15th anniversary in 2005 - but also with highly acclaimed Dutch artists such as pianist Michiel Borstlap, trumpet player Eric Vloeimans and saxophonist Benjamin Herman. The year 1996 was a turning point in Honing's career when he and his trio recorded 'Star Tracks', consisting of jazz arrangements of pop songs. This release caused a momentum: national and international press praised him not only for his capabilities as a saxophone player, but he was also considered one of the new leading voices in jazz. Honing's interests went beyond jazz and pop, while improvising freely with the legendary pianist Misha Mengelberg or exploring new grounds with virtuoso musicians from the Middle East. With this last experiment, Honing made the music of the Arab world accessible and recorded it. The CD 'Orient Express' received favourable reviews, reached unconventional sales figures and also was nominated for an Edison. American pianist Paul Bley was so impressed by what he heard, that he suggested Honing should do a quartet recording with bass player Gary Peacock and drummer Paul Motian. 'Seven' was released in 2001 at the North Sea Jazz Festival in The Hague, where Honing performed with Paul Bley and bassist Charlie Haden. Later that year the album was awarded with the Edison. In the same year, Honing recorded 'Memory Lane', a ballad album that shows his lyrical side. For this project he invited some of the finest musicians from the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra to create a large ensemble with strings, woodwinds and rhythm. In 2003 the world famous guitarist Pat Metheny, Artist in Residence at the North Sea Jazz Festival, chose Honing to play with him and bassist Scott Colley, playing originals by Honing and Metheny. Currently Honing focuses all his attention on his new electric quartet, called Yuri Honing Wired Paradise, consisting of his trio and featuring the famous German avant-garde guitarist Frank Moebus. While touring in more than 40 countries around the world and making numerous records, Honing built a unique personal style which is based on jazz, pop music and non-western musical traditions.

I wanted to be a soloist, a famous saxophonist having his own band, recording CDs and touring the world. The amazing thing is that in the end this actually happened.

Background

Yuri Honing was born into a musical family. His father studied at the conservatoire and had the ambition to be a professional pianist but instead became recording engineer at the Dutch National Broadcasting Company in the Netherlands. Yuri's mother played the piano at conservatoire level: "She stems from a time when her father forbade her to go to the conservatoire." Yuri has two older brothers, one six years and the other five years older. The eldest brother works at the faculty of

Psychology of the Amsterdam University as a doctor in music cognition, the younger brother is a drummer currently working in a music shop and teaching as well.

Childhood

Yuri was born in 1965 in Hilversum where he grew up and went to a primary school he liked. "It was a private school, *elitist*, very enjoyable and housed in a beautiful villa. I have good, even idyllic memories of that school." The school was very small; Yuri was in a group with two other children. "Therefore for the first seven years of my life I nearly had one-to-one tuition and I feel that this gave me a lifelong advantage."

Yuri has memories of his mother playing the piano in the evenings when his father was at work. "My mother often used to play Bach. I remember clearly the first time when it touched me really deeply. I heard her play a movement of an English suite and it made me cry. I went quietly to the loo and sat there crying. From that moment this feeling of emotion in music was with me, an emotion which I followed in the end."

Music was important in school and it interested Yuri. When Yuri was five years old his father started teaching him the piano. His brothers played the piano as well. After one year Yuri got lessons from Ms. de Lange, a former concert pianist who was a friend of Yuri's mother. He feels that she was a good teacher for him and things went well. "She felt that I was musical, my hands were right for the piano, and my motor learning went easily."

After four years Yuri switched to another teacher, Jaap Koning and stayed with him for two years, till he was about twelve years old. "I felt I might like another teacher, but in fact it was not quite as good as what I was used to. Mr. Koning would let me practice a small piece for a full week, and if he was not satisfied enough he would ask me to repeat it for another week." Yuri feels that Mr. Koning was partly responsible for him stopping to play the piano. "The other 50% was due to the pianist Vladimir Ashkenazy; at some point I got a recording of him, which was so fantastic that I knew I would never reach this level, so I decided to stop."

Choosing the saxophone

When Yuri was twelve years old he went to the Atheneum[1], not to grammar school, which was according to his father for 'right wing people'. During that time his parents started asking him which instrument he would like to play instead of the piano. "In our family it was impossible not to play an instrument; you would be considered a *loser*. At some point I had this recording of David Bowie playing with an alto saxophonist called David Sanborn. His saxophone sounded fun, and I realised that if I could play the saxophone I would be doing something unknown in

our family. Everybody knew about the piano. If I played a wrong note my father would hear that while reading the newspaper and comment on it. The feeling that everyone could interfere with my music-making was suffocating for me. Nobody would know about a saxophone though; at that time it was even a fairly unknown instrument. So that is what happened. The day I said I wanted to play the saxophone my father read an advertisement in the newspaper from a circus artist who put his saxophone up for sale. My father bought it and said that he would loan it to me and if I appeared to be talented he would give it to me. But first he took me to one of his friends, who was a saxophonist, to test me. My father's friend said to him, 'we won't tell Yuri anything. I will play him a song, and if he can reproduce it within a few minutes that seems okay, and if not you should take the saxophone back'. So that is how it all went."

Yuri started to play the saxophone and within half a year he played in six different bands in Hilversum. From the age of thirteen on he had private lessons from the baritone saxophonist Wim Tober. "He was not a fabulous musician, but a very good teacher. I feel I owe him a lot. He told me a lot about phrasing, which was useful, but the best thing he taught me was how to deal with breath support. He was very eager to give me a good basis in that and right up till today I benefit from it."

An important event for Yuri happened during one of the holidays with the family in Switzerland. Yuri just played the saxophone and at a certain moment the family stumbled across the Montreux Jazz Festival. "We bought tickets and went to concerts. I saw all the celebrities, like Dexter Gordon having a drink, and many others during concerts. Two years later we were in Montreux again, we were in a hotel and it appeared that Stan Getz had the room next to mine. In the morning he stood playing the saxophone on the balcony in his bathrobe! That made an immense impression on me. Stan Getz was to me one of the greatest alto saxophonists ever."

Period of adolescence

"I was quite hit by puberty. The relationship with my brothers was not that good. I felt like an only child. I was quite an *Einzelgänger*, and did not have a real brotherly relationship with my siblings. I sorted out things on my own. At some point I went after the third grade of the Atheneum to the fourth grade of the HAVO[2] and did my final examination after two years. I was quite distracted by a lot of the things boys of that age are preoccupied by, and my music-making suffered. There was a period when I only played the saxophone once a week, when practising with the band."

But nevertheless those were the moments Yuri enjoyed. "I liked to experiment, I liked to play on the stage. I was in a group with some nice smart boys and we played songs and popular dance tunes together. We got a lot of gigs, and earned some money. Other boys had to deliver newspapers but we had our gigs."

After his final examination of the HAVO in 1982 Yuri went back to the Atheneum. He was in the fifth grade but he couldn't bring himself to sit in a classroom again, so he took the course by evening tuition. In 1984 he received his diploma, which was an enormous relief.

All in all Yuri saw his period at secondary school as 'a horrible and black period'. "Five days a week I was involved with group processes, in which I never felt comfortable. I didn't find it agreeable; I am too much of an individual for that. Once you discover how the relationships between teachers and pupils work, how systems work… It did not cheer me up, so to speak. It felt so inefficient; I felt that I lost so much time. I found it hard to make friends. I cannot say that I felt unconfident; that is not in my character. But I was quite depressed as things looked black to me. I questioned the point of my existence, wondering that it does not matter whether you are alive or not. I have the feeling that music saved me from that as it provided some kind of anchor."

Despite moments of turbulence Yuri has positive memories of family life during his youth. "I feel grateful that I have parents who were well educated. My father read a lot and did his best to pass on to us his love for literature. I went with my father to art exhibitions and to concerts. And he really taught me that working in the arts, and especially in music, is a special profession, because he felt musicians were special people. He used to say that a lack of income will always be amply compensated by spiritual income. Which in a way is true, I think."

Choice for the profession

Already at a young age Yuri felt that he would be doing something in the arts. But the feeling was a confusing one. "I did not want mediocrity, so I felt ambivalent. By nature I did not feel attracted to musicians. My brothers tried a career in music, so did my parents; I witnessed it all. My brothers were successful in pop music but were not admitted to the conservatoire. I felt pressure to take up an academic study. I considered seriously about reading Law but in the end I decided differently."

This decision had much to do with a new teacher that crossed Yuri's path, Henny Kluvers. Yuri was eighteen years old when this happened. "I was improvising a lot by then and it must have been my father who put me on his track." Henny Kluvers was saxophonist in the jazz orchestra *The Skymasters*. "The first thing he did when I came to him was explain to me what I was actually doing. I had no idea, I did everything by ear. Within one month he made me aware that I could become a high level player if I would do my utmost - which I did, from then on. It was the first time that I felt that I could reach a top level. This was an important factor in my decision not go to university. After a few of Henny's lessons I already felt totally different. He gave me a recording of Coltrane[3] and told me to find out the solo by reproducing it. I found it challenging as I had never done that before. But I think he

did it in order to make me realise what I was able to do. He noticed that I had talent and that I had good motor skills."

In the end it was Yuri's father who encouraged him to take up study in the conservatoire. "After a few months my father suddenly appeared during one of my lessons and said to Henny: 'Can you get the boy to the conservatoire?' 'No problem at all,' Henny said, 'but does he want it?' 'You talk to him', my father answered. This was quite exceptional, because my mother was not in favour of it. In our family it was felt important to choose a profession that would provide financial security." Yuri does not know his father's motivation, he never asked him.

In his last year at the Atheneum, the season 1983 till 1984, Yuri had made up his mind and went to the preparatory class in the Zwolle Conservatoire, where Henny Kluvers taught. "It did not seem logical to go to Zwolle, because I knew I did not want to do my studies there, but I wanted to stay for a while longer with Henny as I was learning so much from him. I could hardly believe that I had a big talent for music, but music it was."

Things went extremely well in that year. Yuri worked hard, practised for three or four hours a day, and found that he could work very systematically. He performed in a lot of ensembles and soon became the star of the jazz department at the Zwolle Conservatoire. It was the leader of the Big Band at the conservatoire who advised Yuri to go to the Hilversum Conservatoire, which at that time was considered to have the best jazz department in the Netherlands. "He said that all good saxophonists were there and advised me to ask for Ferdinand Povel as my teacher. I did an entrance examination and I was admitted. That was a real moment of pride. I realised that now I was among the *cats*."[4]

Period at the Hilversum Conservatoire

Yuri started his study in Hilversum with Ferdinand Povel in September 1984. Unfortunately Povel had an accident soon after the lessons began and then for six months Yuri had lessons from other saxophonists, which weren't so successful.

He found the first two years of his study wonderful. "I practised like crazy and I adored Ferdinand. He was my hero and I talked to him nearly every day. Whenever he played somewhere I went and listened; I also talked to him and fished for compliments. I found it fantastic." Yuri studied together with jazz musicians who are currently quite famous, like double bass player Joris Teepe, saxophonist Benjamin Herman, drummer Joost Lijbaart and pianist Michiel Borstlap. With the latter two musicians he was close. "It was great; we worked day and night together."

After those first two years the problems started. "I really got more and more an idea where I wanted to be heading, and Ferdinand did not seem to agree with it. It turned out that he was not very flexible, and that I was in turn a difficult student. In

the three years that followed I hardly had anymore lessons from him. It was a strange situation. I started to take lessons with pianists, which was possible in those days because things were more flexible than now. This was only the second generation of jazz musicians being taught at a conservatoire, so everything was still more or less at a pioneering stage. There were a few teachers who supported me, because I was talented, feeling that if they gave me a bit of space, I would be all right. After the second year I did not follow lessons in any subject anymore. I took my examinations of course. I couldn't go to theory lessons as they gave me a 'secondary school' feeling. I felt I was wasting my time, which I hated, and still do. I was certain that I would succeed in my examinations, and I wanted to use all my time to practice the saxophone. I wanted to become a soloist. I didn't want to end up as a teacher or an orchestral musician. So I knew I had to work like hell in order to cope with any future competition. I also realised that I had to be clear about what I wanted and to make sure that there would be people waiting for me once I had finished my study. I wanted to be a soloist, a famous saxophonist having his own band, recording CDs and touring the world. The amazing thing is that in the end this actually happened."

Things became difficult at the conservatoire. Yuri had conflicts with teachers about the content of the pedagogy classes. "I had my own opinion about teaching, and I was very cocky of course. In addition, I was difficult because I also taught during my study. I had stopped with my pop bands and I wanted to work in a very focused and *puritan* way on my jazz study. But this meant that I did not earn money anymore, hence my starting to teach. I developed methods that I believed in but which did not correspond to the methods they wanted to teach me at the conservatoire - their 'soft sector' methods. I realise I was very 'single track' at that moment but I also knew what I needed in order to arrive where I wanted to be. I couldn't permit myself to take a broad approach. My big fear was that I would waste my time doing things that would turn out to be irrelevant in my life, when I should use that time to practise the instrument I wanted to be famous with."

Key persons at the conservatoire

Yuri never skipped any ensemble classes at the conservatoire because playing was what it was all about. He practised and played day and night. He took lessons with the pianists Rob Madna and Henk Elkerbout. "I consider Rob Madna as my *nestor*, a friend and a guardian angel. He was a very clever man and taught me so much about music and harmony. And Henk gave me some real golden advice. It is sad that they are both not alive anymore."

Another key person during his study in Hilversum was the saxophonist Albert Beltman. "He played the alto saxophone in the *Metropole Orchestra*. He led the saxophone sessions of the Big Band. He actually taught me to read (scores and

sightreading, RS) well. He was some kind of guardian angel for me when it was sheer war between Ferdinand and me and between the saxophone methodology teacher and me."

Yuri's guardian angels prevented disasters, which were partly caused by Yuri's own stubbornness. "They were flexible people, who wanted to understand me and saw my needs." Actually the teachers made themselves redundant for Yuri. "Of course, a good teacher makes himself redundant. As students we respected our teachers enormously but I was just not the person to stick to all kinds of useless rules. Michiel (Borstlap, RS) and I used to travel to Rob Madna in Berkel Rodenrijs sometimes in the evening in order to have him listen to the music and recordings we made. Rob loved it. He looked at our music and would give us suggestions for alternative chords. At some point we would drink a bottle of *jenever* with the three of us and would talk about music till half past three in the night. On those evenings I learned more than during three weeks of formal education in the conservatoire."

Yuri's teachers

"Wim Tober taught me the basic technique extremely well, which I benefit from until today. Kluvers made me aware of my talent. He did it in an ingenious way, by letting me both work extremely hard and at the same time praise me into heaven. I think he knew how to handle me. Ferdinand Povel taught me a number of things for which I feel I must acknowledge him. He had strong *ethics* about what were the right and wrong chords and why. You can distil a lifelong soundboard from that; it gave me reference points. He kind of cleaned me, by that I mean that within one single year he removed one after the other every doubtful note from my playing. He was very strict on that because he knew I was talented. I really owe him for it, because I seldom play 'wrong notes'[5], in the sense of the wrong note in the wrong place. I gained a lot of harmonic knowledge at the conservatoire. The strange thing is that I used to envisage a piano keyboard in my mind in order to keep a grip on harmony; I worked very analytically and my memory is very visual. Of course my teachers helped me there. Funnily enough I learned the most from Ferdinand by the way he *attacked* me on what I did, leading to very sharp conversations between us. After studying Coltrane my big hero became Wayne Shorter and Ferdinand regarded him as the most overestimated saxophonist in the world. He considered Shorter a worthless composer and refused to play his pieces. So if I came with pieces of Wayne I was working on, Ferdinand would walk away crossly. Those techniques of attacking, which he was quite good at, taught me how to defend myself. It made me quite aware of what I am doing and why I am doing it. Sometimes it was difficult; I got a lot of criticism from other students, who used to say, 'you only play what you want.' My response would be, 'don't you then? '"

Despite all the obstacles, Yuri's final examination in 1989 was of an outstanding

level; he graduated with the highest mark[6] and got his master's degree at the same time.[7]

Looking back to the period at the conservatoire
Yuri feels he learned a lot in this period. "I was always an individualist, and that did not change. Those people who adapt to the group spirit in the conservatoire are the same you never hear of anymore after graduation. The norms and values that are forced upon you by the conservatoire are not the same as those in the outside world. The relationship between the conservatoire and real practice was bad. The conservatoire behaved like the Catholic Church by telling you what was right and what was wrong. I *needed* to resist that. I have the feeling that these things are changing now. When I look back, the positive feelings dominate. But I have had big depressions and have often wanted to quit playing. I think that is quite inherent in the profession. Every two years I wanted to put my saxophone up for sale."

When thinking it over, it amazes Yuri that during the period at the conservatoire he actually never felt unconfident about his pathway. "I knew where my playing should be heading and how I would have to reach that point." He feels he has learned the most about playing in sessions like in Rotterdam in *Thelonious* at night. "They started at 10 o'clock in the evening and went on non-stop till 5 o'clock in the morning. There were no breaks, no reading[8] was allowed, you had to be familiar with the repertoire, or learn it while playing. I learned an enormous amount from it. There was a very good rhythm session, and Anton Drukker, who was leader of the sessions used to invite many other very good saxophonists, just to challenge me." Yuri took part in the sessions during the entire period at the conservatoire. "It was really *flex one's muscles* jazz."

Building up a career
Already during his study Yuri realised very well that he would have to work really hard to make a career and earn a living. He found a soul mate in the drummer Joost Lijbaart, who graduated at the same time. "We soon found out that Holland is actually too small to earn your bread independently. I found that out when working as a *sideman;* you are dependent on the whims of other people, of fashion, and have to be very flexible, actually ignoring your own personality. And above all be *cosy*, that is the Dutch norm. Your qualities as a musician are secondary. I didn't want to be dependent on that. Besides my vision on music was very clear and I had a hard time bending to another musician's vision when I wasn't enthusiastic about it. So Joost and I really tried to escape that. He is an extraordinary drummer, a hard worker, he is innovative and always played in my groups, until today. I was the person with vision and Joost had a clear view on developing the *circuit.* We supported each other enormously and still do."

Yuri had to row against the tide: "In the conservatoire we were told that we were

crazy if we wanted to start something for ourselves. If you succeeded you were seen as a commercial dog, or, almost worse, you would belong to the wrong camp of *impro's*. Not a challenging learning environment indeed."

Yuri had really hard times. He had to learn that in periods of work he had to try to find new work for the future, in order to avoid gaps in his income. "There have been several moments when Joost and I called each other crying, saying that we should stop all of this." Agents were not interested as there was hardly any money to gain from this work. "I was a real artist, so it took me quite a while to develop myself as someone who can also think *businesslike*. I had to learn to make a divide between content and marketing. That took me ten years; it was a long and slow path."

The turn for the better took place gradually. Yuri feels that it moved parallel to the development of his own artistry and that from 1996 onwards it became really good. His trio, the Yuri Honing Trio, which Yuri had established just after his graduation, and comprising Joost and double bass player Tony Overwater, made a CD, called *Star Tracks*, consisting of jazz arrangements of pop songs. It was very successful and it was praised highly in the national and international press. "Especially in the UK we had a lot of success. That gave us enough points of departure to set up an international circuit, and to broaden and sustain it – for better or for worse, because we also made a lot of mistakes. Many recording companies went bankrupt. So at a moment when we had a lot of attention from the press we established our own recording company, *Jazz in Motion Records*, working with good international constructions. Nearly all my CDs are released by this company. It is useful, both artistically as well as financially."

From then Yuri's career developed excellently. He finds that since 1998 it became really strong. "From that moment I have considered that what we have been doing as having high quality, and I feel I can defend all the things we are doing really well." Touring around the world started and numerous other records were made, while Yuri built a personal style based on jazz, pop music and non-western musical traditions.

Currently Yuri focuses on his new electric quartet, called the *Yuri Honing Wired Paradise*, consisting of his trio and the German avant-garde guitarist Frank Moebus.

Key persons in Yuri's life

Yuri met his wife Mirjam when he was 16 years old. She works in a managing function in a publishing house. He feels that she has a very positive influence on him. "She always followed my development and stimulated me, also in periods that were difficult. She is good-humoured by nature, I need that. She is smart; we talk about books and music." Yuri and Mirjam have two sons, seven year old Jelle and three and a half year old Berend.

Another person who was very influential for Yuri and kept him out of his 'blackest feelings' was his friend Klaas Fernhout, who died two months ago. "He was a painter and I knew him throughout my whole life. I regard him as my spiritual father. From early childhood he understood me, he taught me to draw, took me to museums. He always supported me, in the darkest times he warmed my soul. He was protective of me, a kind of free port for complicated minds, like mine. He was wise and inspiring and the first person in my life who pointed out to me that my home is in the arts. He was the person who jumped in when my parents, well meaning, were on the verge of taking wrong decisions for me. He helped me throughout my study and afterwards. I lived in bizarre financial circumstances after graduation, in real poverty actually and Klaas and his partner always helped me out. His death is a terrible loss for me. I was abroad and too late to say goodbye. But I am very grateful that he has been in my life."

Physical and psychological stress

His career is demanding. Yuri has had physical problems a few times, not caused by the playing itself, but by the intensive life a touring artist leads. "I realised that I had to be more strict about my patterns of sleeping, eating and drinking, to take life rhythm and jetlags seriously into account. Not sitting in the bar for hours after a concert. I had to learn that. Of course my first transatlantic tours, being in five stars hotels, were a big excitement. We are all older and wiser now."

Yuri feels the problems he had last year with his shoulder had to do with a heavy touring scheme. "I was for two weeks in Brazil and other Southern American countries, having twelve flights in ten days, landing in five to six different climates and when I came home my wife was heavily wrapped up in her work and one of our sons was ill. It was just too much, this enormous fatigue. I am a bit of a workaholic, I am afraid. Right now I try to teach myself to have one day in the week not working. I find that very hard, although I like to spend that time with my children."

Yuri also has depressions occasionally. He feels he learned a lot from his oldest brother who had a serious breakdown six years ago. "That is the moment when my brother and I became friends. Throughout our lives we had a troubled relationship. But through the contact with him when he was in this deep depression I got a lot of insight in my own life history, genes and processes of depression; it helped."

Yuri feels that having a family of his own changed him emotionally very much. "The first time I felt that in-depth was when my youngest son was one year old. I was leaving for the USA and he had the flu. When he didn't improve I took him to the GP who diagnosed meningitis in an advanced stage. I had to go with my little son to the hospital immediately. This feeling of desperation, the love for my son, he got a spinal puncture, he was laying there with all those tubes… It changed my life.

It touched me deeply, it was a kind of turning point for me and I realised that I could never take anything for granted anymore. It had an enormous impact on who I was and what I felt, and on how to place things into perspective. In the end it turned out that the diagnosis had been wrong and that he had a virus which was not dangerous. But since then things have changed and my family plays a much bigger role in my life. I know now that life and death are close together, every moment of your life. Children make you conscious of it, especially because they represent new life. Losing people, having children, is really heavy stuff. I was present when my children were born, grippingly beautiful. But seeing your friends die is terrible. That is always a cloud over my head. I can only liberate myself from that when I play. I am on another island then, away from all the beautiful and ugly things."

The role of music

Music is all encompassing: "If I don't play, I will sooner or later be driven mad. It is a necessity. It isn't even that I love music so much. I have thought for a long time that I was exaggerating, but I have found out that it isn't just a thought, I also feel it physically. If I don't play I am in pain. Music is always there. I hear it in my head, 24 hours per day, even in my dreams there is some kind of rustling."

Yuri tries to redirect this feeling: "Last weekend I was together with Frank Moebus and we said to each other that it has only been a few years since we both realised that perhaps the concert we are giving is not the most important thing in the world, for humanity and for ourselves - that perhaps there are also other things of importance. This kind of focusing is of course a natural thing for an artist, but it is also a bit ridiculous. And actually since I realise that playing my concerts is not the most important thing in the world, at least not for a lot of people, I have more pleasure in what I am doing. It is a liberation, like Wayne Shorter once said to me: 'music is just a drop in the ocean'. I feel that now as well, and my music has become better because of it."

Working as a composer and the concepts of Wired Paradise

I compose a lot, but it happens in periods. It is highly connected to what I am doing musically at that moment. Composing is a mysterious process. I cannot say what leads to a good composition. My compositions emerge in different ways. Sometimes there are different ideas at the core of it, some of the compositions I wrote in one breath sitting at the table, and others took me months, going over it and again. Some are very abstract and basic. Others are totally written out. It is dependent on the ideas and of course on the demands of the environment.

All kinds of musical examples act as a trigger for my compositions; like music I get to know through my travels. I have studied Arab music for quite

a few years. I let myself be influenced by the people I talk to and work with, the food, the smell of the country even. I store it, I cannot explain it. Brazil for example has a certain sound and smell. Also India, but also Germany. I try to be open to everything I encounter and at the same time I want to remain loyal to my own nature. I feel I have to remain on the surface of all those impressions, because if I went into too much depth, it would get me into problems.

I think in big lines. As long as you play with good musicians it will be sorted out; a lot of things don't need to be told to them, that is just a matter of giving directions. I hear this sound in my head, a colour, a kind of concept of rhythm, a kind of harmony and then I keep pulling the guys until we have it. In this new phase with *Wired Paradise* we have made a kind of meditative CD, with long-drawn-out phrases, but while we were working on it in the studio we were not so much aware that it would become like this. We just recorded several things and I stored that in my head. At some point every *take* was in my head. I remembered everything in some kind of miraculous way, I then put it together and made it into a whole.

I tell my musicians a lot, but not everything. If I don't know the answers to several things, I let them fill it in. It would be stupid if I prescribed too much; I would ignore the talent of my fellow musicians. Sometimes you have to break through people's patterns. I am happy that the people I play with give me their trust. They even changed their instruments into instruments of different colours after I shared with them the sound image I had in my mind for *Wired Paradise*.

At some point I needed harmony, I started to miss that. I looked one and a half years for a guitarist, and I absolutely did not want someone who was stuck in his genre and repertoire. Then I heard Frank Moebus play at a festival in Berlin and I knew he was my man. His phrasing was wonderful, he didn't play jazz, but you could hear that he could do it. He knows rock music but when you ask him to play something reflecting Ligeti's sound world he will also know what you mean. Frank immediately said yes and now we work with the four of us. It took time, it is difficult to convince them to play a bit more untidily, louder and uglier, but in the end I am given their trust. It had to grow. They had to grow with me, and I had to grow with them. You have to listen to each other and learn from each other, non-stop. Once things are developing well the only thing you have to do is follow the music, because the music tells you what needs to happen. Good musicians understand that.

Artistic learning

Yuri feels that learning only takes place on the stage. "You practise in order to keep up your technique and level of playing. But musical growth happens on the stage."

He finds it difficult to define the kind of musician he is: "I see myself as a *progressive* musician. By that I mean that my aim is to develop music and develop the language of music, not being afraid to explore things I cannot master yet and once I have it within my control explore new things. So I will never think, 'this is a successful format, let me dedicate my further life to this'. Although I could have done that with *Star Tracks*, but I want to continue developing, taking with me what I have learned."

Yuri tries to be reflective about it. "I felt that melancholy and the *blues* play a role in all music that touches me, ranging from Bach to Johnny Cash. That is also deep in my performance and my sound and it is one of the reasons why I can touch people when I play. I am aware of that talent, conscious of the fact that I can play a melody in such a way that people are touched and that it sounds like it is the best possibility. I know it may sound immodest, but it is a specific gift. It is typical Yuri. I have it also in my verbal capacities. I can be very convincing, you would think that it stems from the same source, but I am not certain about that. I find it important to be faithful to myself and to sound like myself. All interesting musicians remained close to who they are. I am also very critical about myself. It gets worse when I am in a depression. When the depression is gone I look back to it as a period in which I was in the fog and in which nothing seemed to happen - in which I wanted to stop playing, hating the business, wanting to make a career turn, getting conflicts with my wife, finding everything oppressive and feeling that my own playing is worthless, asking myself whether I can *play* anyway. And once I am out of it again I find that it has been a period in which much has been learned. At some moment it just happens. I wake up, start playing and everything is back in place again."

Coping strategies

Yuri really had to fight to make his desired career. He calls it 'a thorough lesson in true modesty.' He feels he had to learn to take distance from his music as soon as it was about business, making a divide between the artistic content and a product that can be sold. "I need to realise that it is just a system I deal with. So if I have to negotiate about a concert and someone is not willing to book it I must not feel it as a criticism of me personally. I needed to learn to cope with disappointment. I was too vain to give up, I didn't want to lose, I wouldn't have been any further as my brothers then. I thought 'if I don't sit down here, somebody else will, and I deserve it more.' That is not so pretty, is it? I have to fight, or I will be eaten."

Yuri has confidence in the future. "I am happy with how things go; I can listen to recordings of our group without feeling vexation. I feel I have a grip on what I am doing. Of course there are always things I want to do better and that is a continuing

feeling. I now have pleasure being on the stage and until ten years ago that was never the case, because I never fulfilled my own standards and expectations and I also worked too often with people I didn't like. Right now I refuse that, no matter how well they play. I even don't want to have anything to do with people I don't like. I know some musicians who pretend, just to have work. Now I do things stemming from my own values. I say to myself 'this is your arena, have fun'. And as I succeeded in that I now enjoy myself on the stage. What is the big deal if it goes wrong? My world is more in balance right now. But my ambitions are of course enormous, especially on those moments where you can have a taste of where you could be. And I would love to be more secure financially. It is crazy; when you are a successful leader of a big company your work will be valued financially. For musicians that will never be the case. Why is that? I would love to grant my wife a time out for example, but also I feel I want my work to be acknowledged in a financial way."

Changes in the environments

"A lot is changing. Stages have disappeared; it has forced me to look across the borders early in my career. It is one of the core issues in life, that everything changes continuously. It cannot bother me too much. I want to be in contact with change and develop myself according to that. What *does* bother me in the Netherlands is that I feel there is a lot of mediocrity in society and that seems to be the norm. I used to be a very *engaged* artist, which disappeared totally at some point. But currently I feel it coming back, especially when I see for example how asylum seekers are being treated in our country. It angers me and I feel responsible for it."

Interview held May 22, 2006 in Amsterdam

1 Secondary school, comparable to grammar school, lasting six years.
2 Higher general secondary school, lasting five years.
3 John Coltrane (1926 - 1967) very famous jazz saxophonist, who set an important example for many musicians.
4 'Cat' is jargon for a real famous jazz musician.
5 Here meant in a harmonic sense.
6 In the Netherlands that is a 10.
7 Yuri earned a DM diploma, which is comparable to a BA and a UM diploma, comparable to the MA.
8 'Reading' meant here as playing from notes.

Michel Strauss

Michel Strauss, considered to be one of the most accomplished cellists of his generation, studied at the Conservatoire Supérieure de Musique et de Danse in Paris with Paul Tortelier and Maurice Gendron and at Yale University in the USA with Aldo Parisot. Cello professor at the Paris Conservatoire since 1987, his lessons and masterclasses have inspired an entire generation of musicians in the United States, Asia and many countries in Europe. Strauss was principal cellist of the New Philharmonic Orchestra of Radio France for nine years from 1980; he also performed as a soloist with many orchestras around the world, premiering several concertos that were written for him. Devoted to chamber music, he played with many artists, among them Henriette Puig-Roger, Tibor Varga, Georges Pludermacher, Gérard Jarry, Serge Collot, Jean-Claude Pennetier, Gérard Caussé, Bruno Pasquier and the legendary Sandor Végh. He also forms a duo with his wife, the pianist Macha Beloovsova. Michel Strauss has performed in most of the French festivals and the most famous concert halls abroad. He has worked with some of the major contemporary composers such as Luciano Berio and Pierre Boulez and also collaborated with the film maker Jean-Luc Godard and the choreographer Maurice Béjart. Michel Strauss is the musical director of the International Festival of Chamber Music 'Musique de Chambre à Giverny'.

When we try to use words in chamber music, it is sometimes necessary, but it's reductive. We should maybe *think* or just *feel* or *smell*. I don't know. So that's why sometimes in chamber music to explain what you are doing is a catastrophe. If I say what I do, I start to do it all the time. And I don't want to, I want to be able to change. I want to be able to do something else. And when I say what I do, I am not free anymore.

Background

Michel Strauss stems from an intellectual and very politically engaged family. He was born in Paris in December 1951 as the third child of a family consisting of a father who was a paediatrician and a mother who was a pianist and an inspirational music teacher. His father died twelve years ago, his mother is still alive and nearly 90 years old. She comes from a family of teachers and spent her childhood in Tunisia. The family of Michel's father consisted of German Jews, all fleeing the Nazi regime just before the Second World War. The part of the family that fled to France was mostly caught by the French police residing under the Vichy government and deported to Auschwitz. Michel's father was a member of the *Résistance.* He married Michel's mother in 1942 in Paris, witnessed by a woman friend who was a communist militant. She was again witness at Michel's second marriage to his current wife Macha Beloovsova, in 2001. The background of the Second World War and a strong belief in communism have left its mark on Michel's development.

A childhood full of music, culture and political awareness

Michel grew up with a brother three years older, and a sister six years older than him. He became the only professional musician in the family. His sister graduated at the Sorbonne in mathematics and medicine and is currently working for the United Nations. His brother is a researcher in economic history, "and I am just scratching my cello. I am the stupid one in the family."

Michel's childhood was happy and full of musical and intellectual nourishment: "We lived in a big house in a suburb of Paris. My mother was a musician, and chamber music was ever-present. At the weekends we had big chamber music sessions, where we invited people, amateurs and professionals, whoever. We talked about politics and about making changes in the world, and in the afternoon we played music, Haydn, Mozart, with whoever was there. Sometimes a flute player would play second fiddle, if another violin was not there to play string quartets."

Michel started to play the cello at the age of six. The reason was very simple: his sister played the piano, his brother the violin ("he pretended to play the violin"), so, with chamber music in mind, cello was the next logical step. His teacher was Marie Thérèse Raabe. She taught the violin, viola, "a little bit of cello and a little bit of piano." Michel describes her as "a wonderful teacher, and extremely dedicated to the teaching of children". He has fond memories of her.

Highlights were the chamber music sessions in her apartment with groups of children, for whom Mlle. Raabe used to make transcriptions in which she would underline the themes in red. "I was six and a half, seven, and we played Schubert, Mozart and that kind of thing. Six to eleven children gathered together. I remember that when we had the theme, we had to stand up. The only other cellist was my little friend YoYo[1], three years younger than me, and when he stood up he was as tall as me sitting down." YoYo and Michel became friends. YoYo's father, who worked as a night guard in the Musée Guimet, was a musician from Taiwan and wrote a piece for two cellos and piano for YoYo and Michel. Michel still has a tape of it.

Meanwhile Michel went to primary school, and when he was about nine years old he changed teachers, now going to the famous cellist Jean Brizard. Michel describes him as 'nice, elegant, gentle and handsome' and as a very good teacher. Jean Brizard taught at the Boulogne Conservatoire, and Michel became his pupil at this school.

When Michel was fourteen and in secondary school, Jean Brizard contacted Paul Tortelier, professor of cello at the Conservatoire Supérieur in Paris, in order to present the young Michel to him. Michel played for Tortelier in the presence of his parents and Jean Brizard. Tortelier found him very gifted, and advised his parents to take the boy out of school immediately so that he could enter the Paris Conservatoire and practice six hours a day. Michel's parents would not hear of it. Nor by the way, would Michel himself: "I wanted to *learn*, more than just playing

the cello." It seems that Tortelier on this occasion predicted to Michel's parents that one day Michel would have Tortelier's position at the Paris Conservatoire. "That became a family joke."

At that time Michel was pupil of the Lycée Hoche in Versailles, being in the second grade, three years before his *baccalaureate*.[2] It was decided that he would start his study at the Paris Conservatoire and meanwhile finish the lycée by *correspondence*.[3] "It just happened, I already gave many concerts; it was a natural thing to do. I loved it, though I was afraid to play. But then, who is not afraid to play? People who have no head."

Michel entered the preparatory programme of the conservatoire, which lasted for two years, and after that took the three year course. In total he spent five years at the Conservatoire, from his fourteenth till his nineteenth year, when he graduated.

Michel's parents were supportive. They did not have a particular career in mind for Michel: "Not at all. To be happy, to be fine is what they wanted for me." It was not easy to combine full studies at the lycée with the Conservatoire: "It was a normal lycée that sent you a pile of work to do at home. So I studied at home: mathematics, geography, physics, English, German, Latin, whatever. It was dry, but I did it."

Learning continued to be important to Michel. When he completed his baccalaureate at the age of seventeen, he was still a student at the Paris Conservatoire, but meanwhile went to the Sorbonne for a year to read German. "That I wanted to continue studying was perfectly clear to me. I even found that I didn't study enough. I think that I was in such an intellectual environment, that I began to be fazed. For many years I thought I didn't have the same intellectual level as my contemporaries. Which was stupid, because my family didn't think that at all. But I felt under-trained in some respects."

Michel describes his home as 'a huge cultural surrounding'. "At Sunday lunch, which began at one and finished at seven, we were with ten to thirteen people, my parents' friends, but also their children's friends. And they also became my parents' friends. Even the children's former boyfriends and girlfriends stayed friends with my parents. It was quite amazing. My parents were very open-hearted. It was all about intergenerational relationships. Not the older with the older, absolutely not. We had big arguments with big goals. And at the same time they had read everything, they knew everything that was happening, be it issues concerning science, or the new theory of this and that. New discoveries in medicine, I tell you, it was something. The family was probably neurotic and difficult. But it was a very enriching family. We were nourished, watered. Therefore, other things could have happened to my professional development."

Adolescence in the period at the Paris Conservatoire

At the age of sixteen Michel became deeply involved in politics: "For twenty years, I was a communist militant, very active, nationally and internationally. And I was even nearly ready to give up music. We were active in organisations, in factories, in social work and so on." Michel mentions as one of the reasons for this: "Probably the fate of my family in the war", although his parents only told him at a later age about what the Nazi's had done to the family. Nor was it taboo to talk about it. He also mentions the fact that his parents were 'progressives', constantly raising with their children issues of equality, racism, and equal rights, though "not at all in a militant way".

Michel's political activities cost him 20 to 25 hours per week. "I was very active writing articles, demonstrating, trying to help union organisations. I even published a musical newspaper which was called *Combat Musique*. It was read by 800, 900 people. I combined it with practising Bach, Bartók and Brahms, which was interesting, because some narrow-minded friends of mine did not like this. So I said, 'Aren't you interested in reading books? Beethoven is like a book! One of our responsibilities should be to broaden access to culture to the biggest number of people.' It is similar. I was an angry man. I still am very angry with injustice and I am still extremely sensitive to what happens."

Michel does not believe that he was a 'Wunderkind'. "I was not one of those kids who play marvellously at thirteen, fourteen. Technically I was not the best in the world. It's very difficult to say, to have an objective view of what I was. But I had problems, related to the instrument. And all this time my teachers were interested in what they were certain I could become. I don't know why, because I was a normal player. I was interested in many other things."

Michel graduated by getting the *Premier Prix*[4] at the beginning of 1971 with Maurice Gendron; meanwhile Tortelier had left the Conservatoire. He finds the achievement very relative: "I had some friends who did the same stuff, but didn't really develop their career that much. And on the other hand people graduated who were not so good but who developed very well."

Looking back at his study at the Paris Conservatoire Michel says: "It was very interesting, because there were extremely interesting teachers and musicians. It was a completely reactionary system though, which it still is to some point. We called our teachers *maître*, for example. It wasn't *that* which was reactionary, but it was the idea that you did things in order to fit into the structure of the conservatoire, whereas in fact the structure of the conservatoire should be there for *you*. And you had to serve the name of the conservatoire, when in fact the conservatoire would be nothing without its musicians. There was no adaptation to the students who were there. *You* had to adapt to the system. And that is upside down somehow, it didn't

really work. Also the fact that they were building an *élite* was to some degree quite dangerous."

On the whole Michel was satisfied with the musical education he received at the Conservatoire. He feels that he had shortcomings, for example not knowing enough about composition. He didn't take any courses in it, and believes that to have been a mistake, "because reading music would have been different for me if I'd done it. So I arrived at the same point probably by instinctive means and by the knowledge that I gained from the education I had later on. By now I *do* have a secure point of view of my musical feelings, but this come from experience and instinct, and only a little bit from my knowledge. I would have preferred it to have come from a bigger knowledge in the first place and instinct in the second place. In that order. It wasn't my youth that stopped me from taking those courses. At that time I had other priorities."

Before graduation going to Israel and Palestine

One year before graduation, in 1970, Michel went to Israel and Palestine. "I went first of all to Israel, I worked in a kibbutz for a while. It is very coincidental, because I played with Daniel Barenboim last week, working with the 'Divan Orchestra'[5] and we talked about this period. My best friend was an Israeli cellist, Schmuel Hagen; he was like a brother. He is wonderful; I met him in Tortelier's class. He is nice, an artist, sweet, a good teacher. He was working in a kibbutz, so I joined him there and also worked in his kibbutz. I visited the occupied territories, which had been occupied since 1967. I arrived in Hebron, first sitting in a bus, and after that hidden in a truck with vegetables. I met some people in Hebron and I visited many families there over one or two days, because I wanted to know. And then I came to a refugee camp which was called the *Arube* camp, twenty kilometres from Hebron. I remember when I entered this camp, that people were surprised to see me. I saw barefoot children playing football with an iron can. At some point one little girl cut her foot. She was crying, her foot was badly cut and I went up to her to try and help. Something had to be done, but nobody spoke English. Then her brothers arrived. We needed to wash the wound, because it could have been dangerous, so we went to the water point, cleaned and bandaged the foot and obviously I told them to keep it very, very clean. She needed an injection, but they said that they couldn't afford medical help. They invited me to their home, to thank me for helping and to meet their mother. So we went into their very modest house and I met the mother and three other brothers. Not the father - he was dead. The mother could hardly believe that I still had parents, as if I did, surely they wouldn't have let me go to this camp. At some point I left, going back to Jerusalem, but they made me promise to come back, to see how the little girl was doing. So I promised I would come back. I went back one week later, straight to their little house in Arube camp, and it turned out the girl was all right. I stayed for one week, in the middle of a big

cholera epidemic. People were dying in the camp. And I remember that one morning I had to go, but I thought they should get vaccinated, so I said so, only they couldn't afford it. Three people had died in the night. On the other hand they organised concerts for me. The people were extremely caring; I was sleeping in the only bed in the house."

United States: Yale University

One and a half year after graduation Michel left for the United States in order to study the cello at Yale University with the Brazilian cellist Aldo Parisot. It was 1972, and Michel would remain there for three and a half years. He had heard about Parisot through a friend who had been befriended by the cellist Ralph Kirschbaum; Kirschbaum was at that time a student of Parisot as well.

"I went to New York first. Having just arrived there I went to see a former student of my mother's. I stayed at her place for a couple of days. She offered to take me to the Juilliard School, and organised contacts with Leonard Rose[6], and Berny Greenhouse[7]." Michel played for Rose, who immediately offered him a place at the Juilliard School; including a scholarship, which Michel felt he had to refuse as he was on his way to Yale.

At Juilliard, by pure coincidence, he met his old friend Yo Yo Ma, by this time enrolled as a student of Leonard Rose. It was a happy reconciliation: "At first, naturally, I didn't recognize him, because the last time I saw him, he was seven. Now he was eighteen. So we went out into the New York streets, to chat." Michel also played for Greenhouse, who made him the same kind of offer as Rose, but Michel had made up his mind.

At Yale he was again very active, both politically and as a musician. He took his master's degree and also a course called MMA, Master of Music and Arts, which served as an extra year preparing for a PhD. Michel realised during his time at Yale University that he needed to invest more in music: "I was searching. At least that is a strong point in me, to know that I have many shortcomings. And once things got going, it moved very fast. I had a very good time with Parisot, he was a wonderful musician and teacher."

Michel looks back at his studies at Yale with great satisfaction: "It was very good. I was very interested in what was going on and I had very interesting classes. In a way it was the opposite of the Paris Conservatoire, which was very strict, academic, respectful, which was fine. But Yale appeared more relaxed. The campus was open; there were open relationships with the teachers, no stress from competition, nor having to be diplomatic all the time. That was very important." Alongside courses like theory, harmony and contemporary music Michel also took social economy and a history class. "I was in the library day and night. I loved being in the library, reading and reading, about economy, social science,

architecture, art and other topics I was involved with."

Musically Michel had very inspiring times. As well as the lessons with Aldo Parisot he attended master classes with teachers like Pierre Fournier and Janos Starker. Parisot disapproved of the amount of time Michel devoted to political engagements: "We also struggled, because he was a democrat, a left wing democrat. But he was very respectful to me. He said, 'You can make a big career, but you are ruining it'. And I said, 'There is more than my career, this is a way of thinking'. But we were the best friends in the world, and still are."

"Later on, my political involvement changed for different reasons. You grow older and younger generations must take over. What I did not give up was my worry about injustice, racism, prejudice, poverty. That really makes me mad."

Michel's teachers

"I had Marie Thérèse Raabe, Jean Brizard, Paul Tortelier, Maurice Gendron and Aldo Parisot. During the time with Jean Brizard and Mlle. Raabe, I discovered music, which was wonderful. Tortelier was a great artist but perhaps a bit sectarian. A little narrow minded, I thought, which was not always good for teaching. You were not allowed to do anything on your own initiative. You had to do *his* thing, with *his* voice, *his* way and so on. I suppose I think of it as reactionary. His stuff had to be *the* stuff. As a teacher I am extremely demanding myself, but I believe that my way is just one way, and I respect other ideas."

Nevertheless musically speaking Michel found Tortelier very inspirational: "He was a *monster* on the stage, a phenomenal cellist and a very inspiring artist, and that goes for Gendron as well. To be honest, I didn't feel they were really good teachers, either of them. I felt they were not open enough, not interested enough in their students' ideas. As a teacher you can demand a lot, you have to suggest things, but you have to listen too. If you don't listen, you will not be aware that students have something interesting to say. You have to let students discover their own way. And that is tough. But in terms of pointing them in directions, you must leave things much more open. I teach them but I let them search. Coming back to my own training, I have never been sorry I did it the way I did it. For me the lessons were very motivating. But I think that for some students they were less constructive."

Michel does not think that it was due to the fact that he was so talented that he coped. "I didn't think I was that talented. *They* thought I was talented. In my opinion I was averagely talented. I reacted well to the music and the phrasing and the interpretation, but I was not, I am nothing really special. I worked for it. It was not so easy. I didn't play so easily."

Technical problems he had to sort out himself: "God, who I do not believe in, knows how much I admired them (Tortelier and Gendron, RS). But I felt that their egos were too big." Unsurprisingly they were no role models for Michel: "Not at all.

It was very clear, even at that time, that I would not like to be a teacher like that. But I respected them highly as artists."

Parisot was quite another matter. "I remember the first lesson I had with Parisot, after my stay in New York, arriving at his house in Guildford. And he said, 'Would you like to play something?' I played the Schumann concerto, and then he said, 'So why do you want to come here?' I remember I said, 'You didn't hear?' And he said, 'Yes I heard'. And I said, 'I don't know how to play the cello'. And he said, 'My God, I don't believe it'. I didn't play so badly, but I wasn't happy with it. I was very negative. I had to work on confidence, especially on stage. Parisot said, 'I know what I have to do with you; you are a phenomenal cello player'. Then things started changing, and he was part of this. He was such an interesting teacher. For example, if someone would come to him with a wonderful sound, but without any velocity or speed, this girl or guy would come to him and play slowly, asking Parisot to teach them how to play fast. Then he would say, 'You have a phenomenal sound. I never heard a sound like that'. And he would give them *only* slow and singing pieces for one year, helping them to recover their self-confidence. Only after that, *then* he would begin to deal with the shortcomings. I saw people change rapidly in terms of self-confidence. Psychologically, he was a real master, it was phenomenal. It did me so much good. The main thing I learned from him was that. *That*, and the fact that he knew me."

Back in Paris, development of career

Michel returned to Paris in 1976. He married Martine Bailly, a cellist who also studied with Parisot and who came back with him to Paris, where she started to work as a cellist in the Opera House. The couple had two children, a daughter, Clara in 1977 and a son, Simon, in 1980. Michel is proud of his children; they are nice and care about people. Clara became a professional cellist and is currently a member of the orchestra of the Paris Opera House. "When she was fifteen months old, she would come when I was practising and put her head on my lap. She would spend hours between the cello and myself and be surrounded by the vibrations of the instrument." At the age of eight Clara already knew she wanted to enter the opera. "She has always had a passion for opera and dance. When she is not on duty she goes there to listen. She knows all the dancers, she knows everything exactly."

Simon is currently acquiring his master's degree in English and Linguistics. He also is a jazz guitarist and drummer. "He is very gifted, very virtuosic and he has never taken any lessons. He has some twenty students, and teaches every day. At night he plays in bars. He is working a lot."

In the late seventies Michel started teaching. "I was teaching in four local conservatoires, three hours here, two hours there, whatever. I was a young man, a

student, twenty-five. Then, very fast, I became a teacher at the Conservatoire National in Boulogne, which was the biggest regional conservatoire in France. After the retirement of my old teacher Jean Brizard, I was appointed. I was even teaching pieces I hadn't played before. I had to learn. Bizarrely, I can play, not the whole repertoire naturally, but quite a lot of pieces. I had to learn many pieces and if I had not played them before, teaching them made me able to play them."

In 1980 Michel was appointed at the Conservatoire Supérieur in Lyon. But due to a conflict dealing with teaching matters he left before starting, together with two colleagues. "I had not a single penny then, but I had a wife and a child. No job, because I had given up Boulogne. But I still had my concerts. It was complicated because the concerts were not so well paid. For myself, I could make a living, but with a family it was difficult. We had just bought a house. So I realised that I had to try to find another position. Then I heard about a job of *super soloist* in the Philharmonic Orchestra of Radio France. It was a special position with a good salary. I asked I could still apply and I could. But the programme for the audition was enormous, with two or three concertos and three rounds. My wife was eight and a half months pregnant with our second child. It was not a good time to enter a competition. I asked a friend of mine who played in this orchestra to tell me what the programme would be. He told me the concertos would consist of Dvorak and Haydn; 'the very well-known one' he said, 'in C Major'. So I prepared that, fortunately I knew the Haydn in C. A couple of days before the audition, I had a concert in Venice and when I came back I went to sign the register and I found out that actually I had to play the *other* Haydn concerto, the one in D Major. So I learned the piece in two days and then I played and I got the job. It was not so easy because my wife gave birth between the two rounds, to our son Simon. So I spent the night in the clinic."

Michel was to stay in the orchestra for nine years. He remembers it as a very good experience, and a very interesting time, during which he learned a lot. "I learned about the orchestral repertoire, the discipline, sound projection. I wasn't good at the beginning, I was a good principal cellist, but I was too demanding for the section, consisting of people of different ages. Looking back I think I arrived like a militant fighter saying, 'This has to sound like this and that'. There were people of different generations with different needs, about which I had no clue. I realise now that I should have done it differently. It took time to realise. But they still respected me and they were nice to me."

In 1989 Michel left the orchestra, because by now he had up to eighty solo and chamber music concerts a year. With his teaching commitments at the Conservatoire National of Boulogne and, from 1987, at the Conservatoire Supérieur in Paris, it had become too much to deal with.

"Practising and finding time to prepare concerts was not easy. All those years

when I came home from the orchestra, often I practised from eleven in the evening to one or two in the morning. Waking up at seven to take the children to school… I was really spending a lot of hours on the job. I was away all the time. When I was home I was teaching a great deal. And I played in the orchestra and performed concerts. I realised I had to make a choice. It could not continue like that, although the orchestra was extremely good to me. I never cancelled a tour, because we could exchange series with colleagues. My wife was meanwhile in the opera. In 1983 she had been appointed principal cellist there. It was a completely crazy life. I remember that during this time we made a film with Jean-Luc Godard, who came to film in our house. The film was *Prénom Carmen*, which he filmed with our quartet. The topic was the Beethoven quartet. It was something. We had to play till two in the morning to make the shots. It was extremely interesting. The film got the *Lion d'Or* in Venice."

A life changing accident

What happened in 1983, in this completely disastrous time, is that I cut my left index finger off. On the 13th of June. My wife was in the opera house, I was cooking, the phone kept ringing, I was with the children. I was preparing frozen fish and tried to sever them with a knife and then it happened. And I knew in that second that this was it. I said to myself, 'Okay, this is the end. That's it. This is my career. I did some interesting things and that is that'. I cut the tendons off. I knew it was disastrous. I had to do concerts in Paris, Beethoven triple concerto, the Dvorak concerto in Central Europe, I had to make recordings, I had to do many things. So I went to the hospital and I said to this doctor, 'I am a cellist'. And this surgeon, who was a real artist, said, 'Yes, you have made a wrong move. But I mean to take care of it and you will play the cello again'. He operated on me, micro surgery lasting five hours, and then I went into recuperation for four months, not touching my cello. That was really heavy.

I had a very good relationship with my physiotherapist; I was there almost every day for four months. After about three months I began to play the cello again, for a few minutes a day. The accident happened in June, and I think I accepted a concert in January after that. It was a concert in Winterthur in Switzerland, and I told myself, 'If I can play this concert well, I am going to keep my job, if not I'll change profession'. My surgeon came to Switzerland to hear me play again. It was such hard work…a life-altering experience I think. Objectively maybe not, but subjectively I took it very badly. I told myself that I could come back from this once, but not twice.

The accident changed a lot in Michel's life: "I don't think it helped my relationship with my wife. It was a big crisis. Things were going quite smoothly until then,

hectically, but quite smoothly. And then suddenly it was a puzzle, everything changed." Michel and his wife would divorce a few years later.

Looking backwards twenty-two years Michel thinks the accident in the end improved his playing. "I had to think again, and think ahead. Well, actually, my *mind* made me improve. My mind created the problem and that made me improve. My background made me use my brain. It made me think, how I could deal with turning it around. I had problems, I had to change fingerings in every piece. When I was playing my hand felt heavy and stiff. I could not bend my finger. I had to fight. I played the repertoire, but awkwardly. Because of this setback, I realised I had to do some things differently. Not so much musically, but in terms of my technical ability I was fighting, and then in the end I found better solutions. The technical ability came back fully, but I had had to deal with the problem more deeply."

Teaching at the Paris Conservatoire, creating a multiform career

Michel's divorce left him depressed, but his father encouraged him to apply for a position at the Paris Conservatoire, which in the end he did. He was appointed in 1987. "So I was very lucky. All those years I did a lot, I tried the best I could. I have very strong points, but I also have very weak points."

Michel is very self-critical. Actually it is never good enough, "but it's all right, I accept this. I am amazed at my first twenty years in the profession, about the way it worked for me. It was luck, but probably also character. People liked the fact that I was open, and that I was interested in many things. Maybe that was my strong point, to be open."

There must be a relationship between how his life and his career developed, Michel thinks, "because it's a multiform profession that I have, which is not strange nowadays, everybody has that. But it used to be more rare; you were either teaching, or working in an orchestra, or working solo, but all those things came quite naturally to me in the development of my career."

A new marriage

In the nineties Michel met the pianist Macha Beloovsova who would become his new wife. They married in 2001, after their twin girls Elena and Lisa were born in 1998. Now they are seven-and-a-half year old cheerful little girls, playing the piano, dancing and speaking Russian fluently.

The 'why' behind teaching and the centrality of music

"I think in music, and the amount of time I spend with music is huge. Why do I teach a lot? Because teaching is a lot of time spent with music and *transmission* as well. Maybe I am a teacher because I have been a militant. And a militant wants to convince. Maybe I am also a teacher because, paradoxically, I am easy to convince. That is very important. So music is very important. But many things are important

in my life, such as my children, my family, big world issues, friendships. All these things are very important. I am very lucky, because it all works in harmony."

Playing chamber music without words
In chamber music Michel feels 'like a fish in the water'. "The exchange, the ideas of partners, taking them and transforming them. It's a real game. I see it and explore it in a different way. It's a real dialogue. It's the same thing as having a good discussion with two or three friends. We don't analyse the score; we play. When I play with friends, it happens, the concept emerges. So I would never walk on the stage with three or four people I don't know to play Beethoven. For me the conception of the piece is a result of *live* performing. The knowledge of the repertoire is of course nourishing the piece that you are playing as well. A conception does not come from a fixed ensemble; it comes from my own concept of all those works, all those composers, from varied experience, and from being a teacher, from explaining it and from playing it. When you play a new piece by a composer you don't know, then you have to understand his intention, and what point he is making. But having come across so much music you finally find a thread, a factor. You might make a mistake, certainly, but you find a thread. That's the way I play chamber music most of the time now. It's an exchange. In chamber music I don't like to talk too much. I used to talk a lot, but I don't talk anymore, I just play. And I notice that just by playing, things will be added. For example, you have an idea, your partner is sensitive, so he gets the idea. But if he gets something different from your idea and then begins to *explain* that by saying, 'Oh! that is very good, but I am going to do it a little bit different', this could weaken the interpretation. I do not want it to become an objective thing, I want the beauty of uncertainty. Words are phenomenal media, but not here. The same words can have completely different meanings. So it's sometimes necessary to discuss in chamber music rehearsals, but it's restrictive. We should maybe *think* or just *feel* or *smell.* I don't know. So that's why sometimes in chamber music to explain what you are doing is a catastrophe. If I say what I'm going to do, I start to do it all the time. And I don't want to, I want to be able to change. I want to be able to do something else. And when I explain what I'm doing in rehearsal, I am not free anymore."

Highlights in performance
Michel has known many moments of ultimate joy both in chamber music and as a soloist. He has played under many famous conductors. At the age of 21 for example he played under William Steinberg during a tour in America. He played with famous French musicians like the flautist Jean Pierre Rampal, oboist Pierre Pierlot and the trumpet player Maurice André. Highlights in chamber music were playing with violinist Sandor Végh, with Rostropovich and Henriette Puig-Roger. "She was a pianist, and she had taken over after Nadia Boulanger retired. She knew

everything, she played everything, she was a composer, she could analyse everything. You could put the part upside down, sideways or whatever, she would not miss a single note, she was always there. I did a big tour of Japan with her, and we loved it so much. We had magic moments. She was 81 by then."

Michel plays a lot of solo concertos with orchestra, all over the world. He has covered the bulk of the repertoire. Many tours he does consist of on the one hand playing chamber music and on the other playing solo with orchestra. He loves both: "They are comparable, but present a different type of challenge. I think I am very close to chamber music. The repertoire is more interesting. It's richer; chamber music seems to be to musicians what poetry is to a writer. It is their secret garden, maybe. Except that poetry is really secret and chamber music is less secret."

Dealing with nerves and having great moments

Already when he was performing as a child, Michel had to cope with nerves. "I have suffered from nerves all my life. I used to get really nervous when I was a young man, to the point where I couldn't eat the day before a concert, but that has changed. In the past I had to fight against myself because I had an ideal of how the music should sound. You know, there is also the problem that if you are very, very nervous, sometimes you are basically nervous about the view that you have of yourself. And the audience is this mirror, so you don't want to see yourself. So you don't accept something in yourself. Now I feel a little better, because I have nothing to lose. I have the age I have and I play. And okay, one evening is a little less good, another is better. It is human and everything is relative. By now I've learned to accept some shortcomings. *And* I can have great moments. I am not talking about great music, but about great moments as a person. What I mean is feeling really fulfilled. I remember a recital my wife Macha and I gave a few years ago in Bern. We played *Kol Nidrei*, *Arpeggione*[8], and Bach. It was a benefit concert for the Middle East, enabling two delegations, Palestinian and Israeli, to come to France to a big meeting of ESTA[9], which would be the first official meeting between these two musical delegations. And Macha and I felt ourselves to be really in the music and in this moment. It was a very special moment, it was quite moving to have organized this first meeting. So I went on stage, then I broke down and I was crying. I could not come back to the stage. We felt it was a very special moment. I don't mean that our music was especially good, but that it gave *me* something very powerful. And that it was worth experiencing it only for *that*. So I hope that the audience experienced it too. On the other hand, I sometimes have the impression that we musicians do not exist at all. Because what exists is the writer, the sculptor, the painter, the composer; the interpreter just leaves a mark. One's vision of a piece is fugitive, one cannot touch it, and it is gone. Two months ago I discussed this with Henri Dutilleux[10], when he came to see me in Giverny.[11] He did not share this view. So I think we have each of us the faculty to see the importance of the other. And the

complementary aspect is there. But I feel very humble about our job, very modest. We are very lucky to make a living off this job, created by another. Can you believe that we are making a living off people who died, or who starved, who didn't have enough to eat? And not only now: these works have probably been read and played by millions of people."

Changes in the cultural environment and in current music careers

Michel realises that young musicians have problems finding jobs, because "naturally the economic situation is very bad and culture suffers from it." He thinks that it is important to help them find new possibilities and to experience the arts in relationship to the public, which is not exactly what they are taught.

"They thought they would be big soloists, have international careers playing concertos. And there are so many other ways to use their talent and to communicate with people, which they do not dare touch. They are not aware of how to relate to other economic aspects of the profession, who to talk to, which organization to join, and *that* is a gap in this young generation; so I think there are shortcomings about that in our teaching. It may be the job of a cello teacher to do that, but it should *certainly* be the job of a conservatoire; because we cannot throw people into professional life when they don't know how to make a living. They know their job, but they don't know how to make it work. They think the phone will ring, but it doesn't ring, despite the mobiles."

A story about the power of music

"I went to Japan, a last minute tour to replace a sick friend. My manager called me and asked me if I could take over the tour and do twenty-one concerts with different programmes starting in five days. There were at least thirteen pieces and three different programmes. This was my first tour of Japan. I saw the pianist the day before the first concert. I remember we played the Fauré Elegy, Bach suite nr. 3 and the *Arpeggione* in a city called Kagoshima. A couple of hundred people were there. After the concert we went backstage and there were many people waiting to meet us. A woman of fifty-something came up to us with an elderly woman who was apparently blind, and dressed in a traditional Japanese dress. And the younger woman said, in English, 'I would like to thank you so much, maestro, for this wonderful recital you gave us, we were very moved. My mother here, who is blind, was a violinist when she was young'. She said her mother had been an amateur and loved French music so much. 'But we are very sorry', she said, 'because we arrived a little bit late'. 'You didn't hear the first piece then?' I asked. I stood with my hand in the old woman's hand and I looked at my partner. Together we took her back to the hall, which was empty, black, no more light. We placed the old lady on a chair in the middle of the hall, and went on stage again and played the Elegy of Fauré. She was

very moved, unable to talk. And then we kissed and said goodbye. The next day we were playing in Aomori. This city was 1500 km north, so we took a plane to go there, and we played our programme. In the intermission a man came up to us and presented us with 'a little something' that had been sent to us by people from Kagoshima. He had brought a beautiful dress for my partner and some beautiful eighteenth century pottery for me. We were naturally very, very moved. We finished the tour and I went home. Two months later, my manager called me, inviting me to Japan again. So in the same year, there was a second tour to Japan. But this time it was to be a tour with violin. I had the pleasure of performing with my friend Gérard Jarry. We went, and I called my pianist in Tokyo and asked her to tell this family that we would play again. She called back two days later and said that the old lady was very sick and was in hospital, dying. So I left a message for the daughter, inviting her, and heard that she intended to come. We arrived and went on stage. We had prepared a new programme of Ravel, Kodály and Bach. And who was sitting on the first row? The old lady! I was very surprised. We finished the concert, and backstage came the woman and her mother. I said to her, 'I thought your mother was very sick'. 'Yes, maestro', she said. 'Very, very sick, it was hopeless, the doctor told her. But when I told her you were coming, she said 'I have to hear it' and she stopped dying'. And so there she was. We had dinner together, though she was naturally very weak. The following year I came again to play with an orchestra, but not there. We played in *Ongakonotomo* Hall in Tokyo. In the intermission somebody came up to me and said, 'I am from this family from Kagoshima. Would you like to come to the hotel next to the hall, after the concert? We would like to have a little reception for you'. I accepted and asked him about the old lady. He told me that she had passed away. So I went there after the concert and there was the whole family! Ninety people were there, aunts, brothers, sisters, everybody was there."

Longer term aims

Michel has never had concrete long term aims: "I am not interested, because I don't plan far ahead. Tomorrow I want to have more time to read, books, music. I would like to travel, not only carrying my cello, but just to see. Not to visit, but just to feel a little part of this very small world, which I don't know well enough yet and to which I feel very connected. Sometimes I say to my wife, 'Let's stop all of this, let's have direct connections with people again'. But that might be a fantasy, I don't know."

Interview held November 25, 2005 in Haren

Soloists III

1 That was the now world famous cellist Yo Yo Ma. His real name is Ernest Ma. His sister was called Marie Thérèse, after Mlle. Raabe.
2 Graduation from secondary, grammar or high school, leading to a diploma.
3 By receiving assignments on paper at home.
4 Premier Prix is given as a diploma of the Paris Conservatoire.
5 An orchestra consisting of young Israeli and Arab musicians.
6 By that time a very famous cellist.
7 Former member of the Beaux Arts Trio, by that time he had just turned ninety.
8 By the composers Bruch and Schubert (Arpeggione Sonata).
9 European String Teachers Association; Michel Strauss is currently president of ESTA France.
10 Famous French composer, born 1916.
11 Yearly, Michel Strauss organises a chamber music festival in Giverny, the place where Claude Monet spent the last years of his life.

Rian de Waal

Pianist Rian de Waal studied at the Amsterdam Conservatoire with Edith Grosz Lateiner and took masterclasses with pianists like Leon Fleischer en Rudolf Serkin. He established important contacts with famous pianists of this era such as Jorge Bolet and Earl Wild. In 1983 Rian de Waal was prize winner at the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels, which brought him international acknowledgement. Since then he performs in major concert halls in the USA, Europe and the Far East. Furthermore he gives recitals, performs as a soloist with orchestras and with colleagues in chamber music. He performed with amongst others the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, the Stuttgarter Philharmoniker, the City of London Sinfonia and the Polish Chamber Orchestra with conductors such as Riccardo Chailly, Hans Vonk and Hartmut Haenchen. With violinist Moshe Hammer, cellist Tsuyoshi Tsutsumi and clarinettist James Campbell he forms the international ensemble Da Camera. With this ensemble he made many successful tours through Europe, the USA and Asia. Rian de Waal is artistic leader and founder of the Rhijnauwen Chamber Music Festival in Bunnik (Utrecht), of the 'Kamermuziek aan de Yssel' chamber music festival in Zwolle and of the northern Peter the Great Festival. He is also professor of piano at the Royal Conservatoire, The Hague. Rian de Waal recently bought a big farm in the village of Valthermond in the north of the Netherlands, where he built a beautiful concert hall, in which he organises concerts and makes recordings.

Death and Transfiguration, risen again from the ashes. I am a new person, who is so grateful that he can play again.

A Christian youth and the Bomb

A Christian family ("a big protestant family")[1] with five children forms the background of Rian de Waal, born in 1958 as second child in the village of 'Welkom' in the area of 'Koppie Alleen' in South Africa. His father was an engineer, who was engaged in projects of irrigation in South Africa. At the end of 1959, when he was one and a half year old, Rian returned with his parents and three year old sister to the Netherlands. They lived there for a short while, expecting to go back to South Africa, when his father was offered a position in the company Grontmij in De Bilt in the province of Utrecht. The family moved there, and Rian lived in De Bilt till he was twelve. He then moved to Bilthoven, a village in the neighbourhood. Meanwhile more siblings were born: one sister two years, and two brothers respectively four and eight years his junior.

During his early youth Rian's father was often absent; as a result of his new job he had to travel for longer periods to Surinam, Argentina and Libya. His mother raised

the young children practically on her own. In the end Rian's father became president of the company and was home more often, but then came the pressure of the enormous responsibility on his shoulders.

Both his sister Mieke and he refused to go to secondary school in Bilthoven[2], being too snobbish to their opinion, so every day they bicycled ten kilometres to Utrecht. He got along well with his sister: "actually we were sort of the last of the hippies, we wanted to connect to that attitude. My sister was fourteen, and she had eighteen-year-old friends, I went a lot with her and she influenced me. We felt engaged with the problems of the third world, we helped out in the *Wereldwinkel*[3], we collected money for Angola and so on."

Secondary school was easy for him. Initially Rian was fascinated by mathematics, but it changed as he grew older: "In the second grade, when I was thirteen, I started doubting everything, I came into my period of adolescence. My ideals changed and I became cross-grained. I decided that I would live in a commune and that making music would fit to that."

During his youth Rian felt the pressure and threat of the nuclear bomb. "Actually it worked in a quite positive way for me, I felt that every day we were still there all together was a gift. If this will be the last day, I'll take care that it is going to be a wonderful day, I really remember telling myself this for years." Somehow Rian felt fascinated by these threats; he read a lot about it, about societal systems, communism and so on.

He refused to go to church from age fourteen, but at the same time a lot of religious movements emerged which appealed to 'hippies'. Rian felt attracted to that, but not to the regular protestant church. The idea of 'hell and eternal damnation' depressed him.

For his parents the church meant a lot. Until today, his parents have been very active in the church. Rian's mother has Alzheimer disease at present; his father takes care of her, and the church gives them support. None of the children kept going to church when they were grown up. Nevertheless Rian understands very well what the Christian religion can mean for people.

He describes his youth as happy and harmonious. His parents were not too strict with the children, but set examples. They supported their children strongly. Rian feels that, through his music, he held a special position in the family.

Music in the air

Music was in the air. At home there were many recordings and on Sundays Rian's father played on the electronic organ, while his mother sang in a choir. "We listened a lot to classical music at home, and there was a piano. I always advise people with children to have a piano in the house. If children are really interested they will be drawn to it."

This statement comes from experience; Rian already got his first piano lessons when he was five years old. His seven year old sister started piano lessons and whenever she practiced her little brother took his toys close to the piano and listened attentively. "If she would play a wrong note, I would correct her by pressing the right key. 'Wrong Mieke! ' Of course she could not stand that."

The discovery of Rian's deep interest was of course soon made by his parents and Rian started by having five minute lessons after his sister's lesson. His teacher, who came to their house, was Henk Gort. According to Rian he was a person of 'ill repute' in the world of Dutch pianists. "In my eyes he seemed age-old, he was nearly sixty! The worst that he used to say to me was 'you have to dance with your hands over the keys like Cruyff[4] dances on the football field.'"

The first few years everything went well: "my own musicality was my motor." But Gort was not an adequate teacher for the young pupil, although he sometimes did things that were, according to Rian, quite interesting, like asking him to play a Beethoven *Minuet* from memory and telling him to look around at the same time and tell what he saw. "His theory was that a virtuosic piano technique develops via a kind of semi-automatic system. I could easily play from memory and talk about other things at the same time, because I could handle those separated circuits easily. He probably found me an interesting guinea pig."

Rian's first public performance took place in Utrecht, at the age of six, being an initiative of his teacher. After that he played during other occasions. But nevertheless he lost his motivation: "The man did not interest me at all and he was too old."

Between the age of eight and eleven he played the piano much less. He feels that at that moment his parents 'saved' him for music. Arguing that he had started to play the piano out of his own interest, they persuaded him that his motivation would come back. They made a deal with him: maintaining the piano lessons, play the piano for only 10 minutes during the lunch break, and after school time play as much football as he would like. "I was a proper rascal and a rough boy. A number of years I obliged reluctantly."

When he was eleven years old Gort went into retirement. A new plan was then developed, namely to start playing the organ. Because his father wanted to put more time and effort into organ playing as well, together they took organ lessons with organist and conductor Mees van Huis on Saturday mornings in the Buur church in Utrecht. It was a big success. Mees van Huis was the opposite of Henk Gort, "only slightly younger, but so cheerful, spontaneous and musically inspired, I had missed that so much!"

"On an early Saturday morning in this totally quiet city sitting behind the organ in an immense church, pulling the instrument open and you feeling like a king! For an adolescent boy it was incredibly stimulating and rich. This richness of the

organ, every register having another colour, all of that stimulated me enormously in a period that I had a hard time choosing for music."

Mees knew how to stimulate the child, so much that after a few weeks of organ lessons Rian started to yearn for the piano again. His greatest wish became to play the piano once more, but then having lessons from this teacher. Mees van Huis had a beautiful Steinway at home, so from then on Rian got alternately piano lessons and organ lessons.

"After two years I was totally back with the piano thanks to this two-track policy." Mees van Huis often took Rian and his father to other organs, which was very inspiring: "that is how my love for Bach developed; I played all these great organ works and trio sonatas, but also works of Widor and Franck."

While playing the organ Rian's big love for the transcription repertoire emerged. It was stimulating to take it on together with his father. "My father could not keep pace with me, but while he took lessons he practiced every evening after work."

Rian would go on for a long time playing the organ, only ending it when he was 22 years of age. "I stopped because I thought that playing the organ, being a mechanical instrument, was bad for my *touché*. In my pertness I was convinced that I could detect every organ-playing pianist through his touché!"

The discovery of the piano

"My organ teacher told me that the sound of the organ is detached, so that it was important to play the piano in order to be precise. So initially I also played the piano (again) because of the organ. But I felt very stimulated and discovered Chopin!"

All in all, at the age of fourteen Rian was quite certain that he wanted to become a professional pianist. "It grabbed me." At first his father had a hard time accepting this, realising how easily his son learned at secondary school, and hoping for a technical career for him. But his father was a sport, and when Rian was sixteen years old his father suggested seeking advice about his amount of talent and the choice for a professional career. Rian then played for Johan van den Boogert, by that time director of the Utrecht Conservatoire. "He was the old fashioned director's type. I played the fourth Ballad of Chopin, and he let me sight-read sonatas of Scriabin. I was frustrated that I missed a few notes."

Initially Rian had the plan to go to university after graduation from secondary school, in order to read Russian for a few years and then go to Moscow to study piano. "The Russian piano school was *it* for me. I just wanted lessons at the Utrecht Conservatoire for the time being, until my graduation." But Van den Boogert advised otherwise, to go immediately to the, in his opinion, best piano pedagogue in the Netherlands, Edith Grosz Lateiner. He advised this despite the fact that he knew that she would move from the conservatoire in Utrecht to that of

Amsterdam in the following year.

After this positive advice Rian's father could accept his choice. "Work ethos and the Calvinistic principle of using your talents were very important for him." Rian got the full support of his parents, and they did what was needed, including buying him a Steinway grand piano.

"The piano *was* my instrument, the completeness of it, being a full one-man-orchestra; I have never wanted anything else." Rian's motivation for choosing to be a pianist was purely intrinsic: "I found it fascinating to spend the whole day on music, and I was totally willing to take for granted that I would perhaps be forced to do my thing in a little attic room. It was the music itself that it was all about. When I was thirteen or fourteen years old I used to sit on my bike and then cite Beethoven's or Chopin's opus numbers. As a young boy I used to read everything about music I could get hold of and I would quote no matter whether I understood what I read or not: 'listen Dad, this is *Dostojevsky in music*. It is the great heart that torments itself'. Already at an early age my memory was very good."

Getting famous was not so important for him: "as long as I could do things in my own way, make music like I wanted it myself, and if that would make me famous, that would be fine, but always in this order. My dream was just to perform for people the music you want to perform."

Study at the Amsterdam Conservatoire

Until his graduation from secondary school Rian spent one and a half years in the junior class of the Utrecht Conservatoire with Edith Grosz Lateiner. "As a seventeen-year-old I came to her house for the first time. I remember being very disappointed that she did not have a daughter of my age, which I could impress with my Chopin Ballad!"

In 1976 he graduated and then went to the Amsterdam Conservatoire. He let go of his plans to go to Moscow, "after I read a quote of Neuhaus[5] stating that if as a pianist you could not yet play the Liszt Sonata at the age of eighteen, he would not be interested anymore to teach you. I had the feeling that there was no time to lose. When I was nineteen I played the third Rachmaninov (concerto, RS) with orchestra. I could not wait to deliver myself completely to music."

Edith Grosz Lateiner was a good teacher for Rian, she was enormously stimulating, very confronting and until today they are befriended. Rian stayed the full six years with her. "I still see her regularly. Sometimes I play a new programme for her."

Rian earned his master's diploma[6] in six years, he took no teacher training course. Theoretical subjects were easy for him; with his background as an organist he already had a lot of experience with improvising and harmonizing chorals. "I practised the piano eight hours a day and next to that I was busy with chamber music."

At the conservatoire he tried to form trios and quartets. It was hard to get people engaged in it. "The same as nowadays: 'no time, I have so much to practise'. All these studies and concerts. Incomprehensible." Next to his study Rian visited many concerts. The first two years of his studies he remained at home. In 1978 his parents bought him a little house in the village of Weesp, near Amsterdam, where he could take his grand piano as well. "I did not feel attracted to the students' life. I rarely went out dancing; I just wanted to work very hard."

Rian had a girlfriend in this period, but the relationship ended when he met his future wife Marion, who studied vocals at the Amsterdam Conservatoire and currently is a well-known mezzo soprano.

He feels satisfied with his study at the conservatoire, "thanks to Edith. She always worked long with me and she generously allowed me to use her network. She sort of threw it in my lap when I was twenty years old." Through Edith Rian met the pianist Malcolm Frager in 1976, who became a big example for him.

Edith was married to the violinist Isidor Lateiner. They formed a duo, and from 1979 they had a concert series in the Concertgebouw. "She involved me in it: at first I turned the pages, but at a certain moment she also let me perform. I then played with Isidor, with cellist Godfried Hoogeveen and many more people. Many things I am doing now I learned from her. Playing on the stage with people that were far ahead of me, that formed in fact the greatest lessons."

Edith did her best to put her student in a learning environment consisting of learning 'on the job'. Rian acknowledges that his appreciation of this period has to do with this, and not so much with 'the conservatoire system'. She stimulated him to broaden his horizons and Rian met very interesting people at her house, often from other disciplines. An example was Nancy Gould, a theatre director, who was brought by Edith to the conservatoire in order to work with the students on stage presentation. Rian found it very enriching to learn about this from the point of view of acting. "In the end it helped me feel at home on the stage. Before I begin performing I take care that the stage has become a safe place. I first want to find my here-and-now, concentrate on the orchestra, have a look at the audience, put my chair up and down and so on."

A void in Rian's education is that he never learned to sing. "I have always wanted to learn to sing. It is so crucial. It never happened, so I did the next best thing, which is marrying a singer."

In 1981, one year before graduation, Rian auditioned for the Dutch Music Prize.[7] The jury told him that he was still very young, and that there would be ample time to come back. Rian then decided to for the moment let go of the idea and take up something different: take part in a competition.

A criterion for awarding the Dutch Music Prize was that the candidate should be able to win the first round of an international competition. In 1983 Rian took part in the world famous *Queen Elisabeth Competition* in Brussels and became a finalist. He got the 7th prize. This even led to questions in the parliament: how is it possible to reject someone for the Dutch Music Prize, who subsequently becomes winner in the most famous competition of the world? Rumour went about favouritism, rivalry between the pianists being substantial. All in all Rian still got his scholarship: "I did not care about having this prize or not, all I wanted was this scholarship connected to it." Jokingly he speaks about 'hush money'.

Journeys to America and further development of career

The network Edith Grosz Lateiner provided Rian with was of incredible importance. During his travels to the USA enabled by the scholarship of the Dutch Government Rian met many important and influential musicians and had lessons with them. He met the composers Elliot Carter and Milton Babbitt, and the pianists Leon Fleischer in Baltimore and Jacob Lateiner in New York. Rian stayed a lot in New York and came into contact with other musicians that might be of importance to him. He met conductor and composer Leonard Bernstein a couple of times and also the cellist Claus Adam, being at that time cellist of the Juilliard Quartet. He invited Rian in his class and Rian played chamber music with his students. Rian found it a fascinating and inspiring world.

One of the most important events was the contact with pianist Rudolph Serkin; together with flautist Marcel Moyse and later on cellist Pablo Casals, being the founder of the famous Marlboro Festival. The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra paved the path for this encounter. Serkin was 80 years old around this time and lived in Brattleboro in Vermont. "I stayed with him and his family for a month. It was an incredibly inspiring period. Every other day we sat at the piano, and worked and talked together. We did the shopping and washed the dishes together." Rian describes Serkin as a real lifelong learner: "he practiced Reger's *Bach Variations*, for four hours a day. He had always wanted to record them, but never did it, because an LP had to be turned around half way. Now he could finally record it on CD, which would not break the spell. While being at a high age he practised like crazy in order still to make this recording happen." Together they worked on what Rian describes as his 'underexposed side', the classical works of Mozart, Beethoven and Schumann. Everything was worked through thoroughly. Rian's love for Brahms and Schumann increased.

In 1985 Rian got an American agent, who was a real lover of piano music and had a little company called 'The Virtuoso Pianist'. Through him Rian met the pianists Earl Wild and Jorge Bolet. He also came into contact with Charles Rosen, a very gifted pianist and creative researcher.

Meanwhile Rian's career developed very well, he gave some 90 concerts per year, being solo recitals, concertos with orchestra, in chamber music and forming a duo with his wife Marion van den Akker.

A big threat to the career

An obvious pattern for Rian has always been to cross the borders of his possibilities and it took him a long time to realise that at a certain moment this worked against him. "I was always busy, always on the look-out for more, being a real workaholic." Physical problems started around 1988 and led in the end to a disastrous situation.

> For many years I had a big problem with my right hand, being *focal dystonia*. You can compare it to dyslexia: you cannot find the right muscle tonus. It is a sort of reaction of spasm. This dystonia really developed through my own behaviour. The first signals came in 1988, but I neglected them. I found it back in notes I had taken during a conversation with Earl Wild, with whom I used to stay a lot. In the middle of the eighties he had told me 'watch your third finger, it is having an erection'. So this finger moved beyond my awareness. From 1991 onwards I really had to cancel concerts, amongst which one in Montpellier with the biggest fee I had ever been offered. But my fingers would not work anymore.
>
> I thought it had to do with my way of life. I had had a very busy year; next to my 90 concerts I had learned six new piano concertos, amongst which Brahms, Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev. My marriage was tumultuous. I did not wonder about my technique or about if I was tense at the piano. I just forced. It took me a while to realise all that. So at a certain moment I took two weeks of rest. I decided to use this time to practise hard passages, but then the real shock came: practising only made it worse. I totally lost control of the outside of my hand.
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> It led to a severe crisis. I had just bought a big house, fitting to a 'successful pianist'. At that time I had managers in Amsterdam and London and I decided to be totally open with them. They both reacted sympathetically, giving me shelter by only programming the pieces I still could play, which consisted of one recital programme and the first Tchaikovsky Concerto. Meanwhile I had to find a solution to have my hand on the mend. I knew the stories of pianists like Jan Wijn, Leon Fleischer and Cor de Groot, who suffered from such kinds of handicaps and could not cope as pianists anymore. I found this a dreadful perspective. My illness had not been diagnosed yet. I had visited all kind of specialized doctors, but nobody knew. I still was on the stage, but daily it became worse.
>
> I was really in deep trouble during this period. I got depressed, which was terrible for Marion. I tried to handle my cure in my own 'scientific' way.

I made schemes for my quest for a solution. The director of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra had once said to my agent 'he plays the piano fantastically but he should once in a time suffer a bit more'. I felt that I might be seen as this virtuoso who could play only virtuosic. In a way this was actually true at that time. So I developed this hypothesis about the question 'have I organised this disease because I do not want to be a virtuoso anymore?' I even went so far as to lie down on Hans Henkemans'[8] sofa to find out. Henkemans was old by that time, but still very clever and told me that there was nothing wrong with me. I then tried other therapies, for example 'floating': in a heavy isolated casket with a kind of utterly strong salt solution in the water. The idea was that your spirit would start to leave you. I wanted to find the hidden vaults of my mind. After that I tried *Bagwan-like* therapies. I applied everything systematically and let go of it when it did not work. I felt like Don Quixote fighting the wind mills.

The uncertainty about what was wrong was agonizing. At some point I was in Canada and in Toronto my friend Jim Campbell[9] put me on the track of dr. Chong, who was specialized in profession-related handicaps of musicians. He diagnosed the focal dystonia and told me at the same time that I could forget about my further career, because there was no cure. My feelings hearing this were twofold, I was grateful to know finally what was wrong, and at the same time I thought 'finding another career? Tonight I am on the stage in Pittsburgh and I intend to stay on the stage throughout my whole life'. I was determined to find a solution.

It was my London agent who put me on the track of a solution, by bringing me into contact with a French pianist who had defeated this very handicap. It turned out that in Paris was a therapist, Philippe Chamagne, who had developed a therapy for focal dystonia. I started on the first of August, 1991 and went successively for three years once in a month to Paris for a few days; every time having three sessions.

Originally Chamagne was a physiotherapist who had suffered writers' cramp, for which he had developed a therapy. That was actually the basis. I got a lot of exercises, the first two years without using the piano. I had to do exercises for my posture. He drew parallels with fencing, dancing, conducting and painting. He taught me how things worked in my hand and what had gone wrong. I realised that actually the two hands have a very different function at the piano: the left hand having to realise big leaps and chords, the right hand playing the melodic passages and often being virtuosic. The left hand develops as a block, the right hand becomes more and more pliable in all five fingers. Sometimes you even have to play different rhythms with the right hand. Because the muscular tissue at the outside of the hand gets thinner, slack emerges between the knuckles. That

leads to other movements being 'stored'. Thus the system slowly pollutes. I discovered that my problems actually emerged out of the fact that I am built too big for the piano. Chamagne used to talk to me about 'la lutte contre la pésanteur'.[10] Many pianists came for a 'quick fix' to Chamagne, including world famous pianists, but that was not the thing. It costs a lot of time, and you really have to be deeply motivated to take it on. I used to stay with a friend in St. Germain, and my sister, being a flight attendant, provided me with cheap tickets. From 1994 it went a bit better so I went to Paris less frequently.

In 1997 I went for the last time, Chamagne then telling me my disease had been cured and saying 'the only thing you have to do now is learn to play the piano again'. I learned to play again, in a new way, bringing into practice what I had learned from Chamagne. Of course he had not interfered with my technique, but meanwhile I knew everything, the connection between the muscular groups, the balance that was required, etc. I wrote everything down. One day I may work it out. At that time many remarks that had been made to me over the years about my technique fell into place. I realised no one had ever *really* told me, because I seemed to do everything so easily by nature. I played Rachmaninov's third piano concerto effortlessly. What do you say to someone doing that? Edith sometimes told me that I was too superficial, so with her I worked on musical depth and ideas, and hardly on technique. Of course she saw things, but I conquered everything with the power of my youth and my lack of inhibition. That is how my injury could grow over the years. I survived on the stage for three years thanks to this one recital programme and this one concerto.

Gradually I started to apply my new principles in technique. The next step was to practise new pieces. In order to cope I developed a system of A, B and C fingerings. An A fingering was the ideal one, which I wanted to use with regard to technique and the history of my injury, the B fingering was a sort of compromise, not ideal, but musically acceptable without harming yourself. The C fingering was a 'desperate' fingering, 'if only the music will sound'. I played a lot left-handed which actually ought to be played right-handed.

At present it is really cured and done with. Sometimes problems tend to appear again when I play an old piece, relapsing into old habits. But I fight it and solve it. For the last ten years every day I have had the drive to sit behind the piano and conquer the monster. At crucial moments there were people showing me the right pathway, like my agent who could have been piqued because I cancelled this big engagement, but on the contrary supported me.

Reflections on the career and changes in music life in the Netherlands

The seven year period of fighting the focal dystonia was not without consequences for Rian's career. He had to cancel many things, which sometimes led to the result that for a long time he was not asked again, and had to wait until for example a new management took over. "You have to take care not to become a *persona non grata.*" Nevertheless Rian still gives many concerts, although the amount has slightly decreased compared to the period before his disease.

He feels that in the last decades much has changed in the arts in the Netherlands. The fact that orchestras disappear because of budget cuts means less work for soloists. Aside from that Rian feels it like a loss of capital: well trained musicians being fired, concerts being cancelled and voids appearing: "When an institution disappears a whole environment disappears."

It depresses him, but on the other hand, "where things disappear, other things emerge." Withdrawal of subsidies without any longer term policy, which happens often in the Netherlands, leads according to Rian, to disasters. He finds the cultural policies very *ad hoc*, and being swayed by the issues of the day. He feels that culture in the Netherlands is governed by a little group of influential opinion makers. "If you belong to that system it is fine, I had my benefits as well. But I do see the injustice of it. Holland is culturally a rich country. But the diversified concert life becomes smaller and smaller."

His career is not the first thing in life for him. "Performing for people is my priority. Playing in a nursing home, which is something I have been doing for twenty years, is as fulfilling for me as playing in the Big Hall of the Concertgebouw. A little concert with an audience of ten people can be heaven for me. The essence of music-making is not hidden in the 2000 people of the Concertgebouw. Music is such a marvellous means to communicate. My mother suffers dementia, but she will never skip a concert in my farm in Valthermond. I want to have a piano placed in my parental home, so that I can play for her when I am there."

Important musicians for him to perform with are violinist Christian Bor and cellist Gottfried Hoogeveen. "With them I have moments where things really come together. We played the Tchaikovsky Trio and it was of such inspiration that it became a *Sternstunde*. I love to play with the Parkany Quartet as well, and of course with Tsuyoshi, Moshe and Jim (the members of the Ensemble Da Camera, RS). For me it is very important that both personal and musical qualities of my colleagues and friends match and relate."

The centrality of music – Marion and Nina

"My choice for Marion came through music and we are soul mates in music. We are totally different in character and keep finding each other through music. Just before this interview a wonderful thing happened; Marion is working on something totally

new for her, which is singing Wagner. Together with two coaches she works on the role of Erda from the *Ring des Nibelungen*. It is a new path for her and she asked my opinion about her approach. Together with her I can enjoy that immensely. That is also how our relationship started. At the conservatoire I had to work with a singer, which was compulsory. Edith Grosz dealt with all aspects of my training and she wanted me to have the best singer, so that I would be enabled to learn substantially. That singer was Marion, being *the* soprano of the school. Weekly I had to accompany her lesson. I had to transpose Monteverdi, which I simply hated; my ego could not cope with that. It made Marion wonder how to get rid of me. But romantic songs were of course a different thing, we found each other in that. After a year of working together we fell in love. From the very first day I found her voice and her musicality incredible, it came right into my heart and it still does. I think we would not have become lovers if she had not sung so beautifully. How important is music for me? This is my answer to that question. We are together for 24 years. It has been tumultuous, two musical careers and two emotional persons. But the last years we have been harvesting."

Rian and Marion have a daughter, Nina, born in 1993. Nina forces Rian to create space for her. "I always go on and I always am short of rest, but my daughter needs my attention. I love that and I find it important. In practice I can spend less time with her than Marion. But we try to be together as a family."

Artistic reflection

Being reflective in musical practice is critical for Rian. He mentions an illuminating example: "A few days ago I had a very interesting experience. I had to practise an 'old' piece once again. On August 4, I will perform a Chopin recital in the Big Hall (of the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, RS). That makes me reconsider all the pieces of the programme again. There was for example this piece which I have been playing for years, *Variations on a theme of Don Giovanni*. I have never felt comfortable with the theme. It is of course from an opera, and you can interpret it manifold. I always felt that the context of the piece forced me into a straitjacket. So I decided to let go of the context for a moment and wonder what the theme is telling me. I actually wanted to perform the theme much more lightly, more playful and *secco,* without any pedal. I experimented with it, thinking of the characters of Don Giovanni and Zerlina.[11] I subsequently played the theme in a totally new manner, not fitting in the interpretation of the piece which I had until now perceived. It meant that I had to change the eight introductory pages as well, because they had to lead to the concept of the theme as I had developed it now. So I had to shift, and I did that. In the afternoon I played it for Marion. She heard a totally different vision. Those kinds of things are very precious to me."

Sometimes a kind of catalyst is necessary in order to let go of a former vision in order to give a new artistic shape to a piece of music. "Also Chopin's *Barcarolle*

I already play for twenty years. A short while ago I heard a recording of Cherkassky.[12] He played the piece much slower than I use to do, it inspired me. I now have a Barcarolle which is considerably slower and of much more intensity. That is a concept that fits to my age and my level of musical maturity. Often you notice that you still carry a concept of ten or fifteen years ago with you, but meanwhile you have become another person. It is wonderful to be able to change that and finding out well-known pieces again."

Rian feels that relying on motor skills from the past is exciting and dangerous at the same time. "I experienced it a while ago with Tchaikovsky's first piano concerto. If I do not think, my fingers will know it for me; if I start to think I am lost, because then I don't know anymore."

Levels of musical learning

According to Rian there are different levels of musical learning. "I always have remembered a remark of Isidor Lateiner: 'you cannot play a piece until you can find the fingering, but you cannot find the fingering until you can play the piece'. This reflects the interconnectedness of technique and music. Every fingering creates another musical result."

Rian regards experimentation as very important. When practising or teaching he uses the following hypothesis: "Imagine an eight bar phrase and look for the important components in harmony and melody. Then play it and subsequently judge it. Three levels of perception emerge: the planning (which is the musical concept), the executing (the right key to be pressed at the right moment) and the reviewing (the judging). Actually all these roles have to be performed by one person, the performing musician, and they have to be in balance. That is difficult: often musicians are not able to keep these aspects in balance. This is the analytical road. The other one is the intuitive road. The best thing is when the one road helps and fertilizes the other road. Some pieces I approach intuitively, but then still I want to make this intuition visible by analysing the music. I am a professional, I cannot leave it to 'inspiration' or 'a good mood', I still need to clarify the building stones of this heavenly music. At other moments I can be at a loss to what the music is about. Then I have to find my entrance through analysis, by analysing the musical parameters and making experiments. But the three layers of the person with the plans, the person who performs it and the person who values it are always present. And of course there is always the evaluative interaction: I have this plan, I have executed it like that, it worked well, so was my plan all right?"

Both entrepreneur and creative scholar

For the last ten years Rian has been active in the artistic leadership of festivals. He established the annual Rhijnauwen Festival in the province of Utrecht and is artistic leader of the 'Kamermuziek aan de IJssel' chamber music festival in Zwolle.

Two years ago he bought a huge farmhouse in Valthermond, in the north of the Netherlands, where he built a beautiful concert hall, which is acoustically perfect for chamber music and where he can make recordings. In Valthermond he organises chamber music concerts, "in a way it is 'coming home' for me. My mother told me that when I was a little boy I gave concerts at home for the dolls and the cuddly animals. I made them sit, gave them little tickets on which I wrote: 'entrance 5 cents', and programmes with Mozart and Beethoven. Now I do exactly the same 40 years later!"

Regularly he performs in these chamber music concerts with young talented conservatoire students, history repeating itself. "After I got this prize in Brussels I started playing with the Allegri Quartet, it was an initiative of two managers, they offered us a tour through the Netherlands and Great Britain. I was young, wild and rather inexperienced in chamber music and they were of course very experienced. Playing with them was a big treasure of experience for me, we went through a lot together. Now they are retired, replaced by new young musicians, and the roles are reversed: we now play together with myself in the role of the experienced master. I keep learning from it. My normal partners for chamber music are older than me. Gottfried Hoogeveen, Harro Ruysenaars, James Campbell, Moshe Hammer[13], they are all ten years older. I want youngsters on the stage, the core being that older experienced musicians play with young, talented and inexperienced musicians. It works marvellous. You have to do several concerts together, where everything is involved, like rehearsals, the stress, everything complete."

At present Rian is writing a PhD about romantic virtuosic piano transcriptions, an attempt to a re-evaluation in the 21st century of a reviled genre. He has just discussed the first 50 pages, dealing with Bach transcriptions, with a professor of Musicology at the Utrecht University, who was enthusiastic. The background of the decision to write the PhD lies in his feeling of urgency to convince. "With regard to my own performance I always had the feeling of 'take it or leave it', if you don't like it, fine with me. But transcriptions do not get any fair chance. Until today I have directors of theatres on the phone who tell me that they would love to have a recital, but 'preferably no transcriptions', because they like their Bach 'unadulterated'. I want to convince those people that transcriptions are not synonymous to second-rate music. My motive for not just writing a book, but a PhD is that in the case of a book readers might think that it will consist of anecdotes. I want to ensure that programmers, artistic directors and directors of symphony orchestras cannot ignore this publication. My promotor is a good *sparring partner*, someone I can box with. I love to look for the debate and I find it fascinating to land from one item into another. At present I am reading a book about copyright, which is fascinating. It only worries me how to find the time. When I go on tour, I always take my books and notebook with me."

Also in this area Charles Rosen is an enlightening example for Rian, "His first LP consisted of virtuosic transcriptions with Liszt's Don Giovanni Phantasy and work by Godovsky. He unites a number of qualities which I also seek to develop myself."

Teaching

Rian's career consists almost completely of performing on the stage. Next to that he teaches a few students at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague. He finds teaching very hard. It is a challenge for him to teach very good students, who ask a lot and bring a lot, but he finds it hard to work with students who cannot cope, like one of his students who is according to him only 'the reviewer' and is not able to balance it with planning and executing.

"Actually my problem is that I cannot teach well under a certain level. I am very strict for myself: after twenty years of *Barcarolle* I decide that it has to be different, perhaps I am that strict to my students as well. The students who can cope with that are the very gifted students." Rian always tells his students not to listen to recordings of other pianists as long as they practise a piece for the first time and want to gain 'ownership' of it. He encourages them to develop their own ideas and hopes to prevent them to become 'clones'.

He also finds it important that his students are enabled to learn the principles of conducting, as musical communication with conductors and orchestras is a difficult task. "Nowadays you are granted one rehearsal of an hour for a piano concert of 45 minutes. It is a shame. Learning to conduct would have helped me in the beginning of my career, now of course I am sufficiently experienced."

Death and Transfiguration

Looking back it gives him great satisfaction that he has defeated the severe right hand injury. "I am deeply happy about it. Because I have faced the fact that it could be the end. *Death and Transfiguration*[14], risen again from the ashes. I am a new person, who is so grateful that he can play again. The good thing about the career of a pianist is that it can last so long. I once described the summit of my career as playing both Brahms concertos as a soloist with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in Carnegie Hall. That has not yet happened, so it still might come. And if it would not happen, it is fine with me. I am glad that I can live by doing what I want to do. Even if I did not earn a penny I still would only want to play the piano. Every day I do what I love mostly in my life and I am even getting paid for it!"

Interview held July 12, 2005 in Valthermond

Soloists III

1 The type of protestant church is 'gereformeerd'.
2 Atheneum, practically similar to grammar school, consisting of six grades.
3 'Worldshop', benefits of such a shop all go to third countries.
4 During Rian's youth a very famous Dutch football player.
5 Heinrich Neuhaus, Russian pianist, teacher of a.o. S. Richter, E. Gilels and R. Lupu.
6 By that time called Performing Musician, nowadays a master's degree.
7 A prize for extremely talented musicians, financially enabling a study abroad.
8 A pianist who became psycho-analyst at a later age.
9 James Campbell is clarinettist, together with Rian member of the Ensemble Da Camera.
10 The battle against the laws of gravitation.
11 Two of the protagonists of Mozart's opera.
12 Shura Cherkassky, American pianist of Ukrainian birth.
13 Hoogeveen and Ruysenaars are Dutch cellists; Hammer is an American violinist. He forms together with Rian, James Campbell and cellist Tsuyoshi Tsutsumi the Ensemble *Da Camera.*
14 Here Rian refers to the title of Richard Strauss' symphonic poem 'Tod und Verklärung'.

Marie Françoise Bucquet

Pianist Marie Françoise Bucquet was born in 1937, in Montivilliers, France. She studied at the Paris Conservatoire, the Vienna Music Academy and with Wilhelm Kempff and Leon Fleischer. She also graduated in Psychology (with a thesis on the imitation process). She attended courses of Eduard Steuermann in Salzburg to study music of Schoenberg and followed courses by Pierre Boulez in Basel. Marie Françoise Bucquet had an international performing career: regularly she was invited to perform in Europe, the USA and Asia. Sylvano Bussotti, Betsy Jolas, Luis de Pablo and Iannis Xenakis have written for her. The recordings she made for Philips include Schoenberg's piano works (Edison Award 1976), Stravinsky (Grammy 1978), Bizet, Bartok, Berio, Stockhausen, etc. From 1983 until retirement she was professor of piano (post-graduate), chamber music and Head of the Department of Piano Pedagogy at the Paris Conservatoire. Marie Françoise Bucquet also conducts regularly masterclasses in the USA, Italy, Holland, Hong Kong, Spain and Portugal. She worked as a judge in several international competitions, such as Gina Bachauer, in Dublin and Helsinki. Since 1980 she accompanies the famous baritone Jorge Chaminé with whom she recorded four CDs. Since 2001, Marie Françoise Bucquet and Jorge Chaminé hold monthly master classes at the Gulbenkian Foundation and at the Spanish College in Paris. Marie Françoise Bucquet is Officier des Arts et Lettres.

Teaching is not taking power over somebody. I hate that. You must know that sometimes it can take students a week and sometimes six months, you never know when it comes, but you must be there. You must be able to transform your relationship into something your students require.

Childhood

Marie Françoise Bucquet was born in Montivilliers in France and moved at the age of eight months to Paris. "I come from a very intellectual bourgeois family, a family where everybody had to do well in studies. There was a lot of emphasis on achievement." Her grandmother was important in the commitment of music. "She was a woman who was born in 1870 and she fought all her life to free women. She was a great fighter. She was the director of a private school, and she was the most important person to me in my career, because she wanted us to be successful, but even more she wanted us to be independent. Her mother was Spanish. I think she taught me what it was to be not just French."

Marie Françoise's parents were well to do. Her father was a business man and an amateur cellist. Her parents loved music, took the young girl to concerts and gave her opportunities. One brother was born before her and was to be a lifelong support.

At the age of five and a half Marie Françoise got very interested in the piano. Living in an apartment on the fifth floor she heard someone playing the piano on the sixth floor. The sound of the piano fascinated the girl. Her parents contacted the people on the sixth floor for information for a teacher, "and so I fell into the arms of the Marguerite Long School."

A discouraging time at the Marguerite Long School
"The Marguerite Long School was at that time, 1944, 1945, at the end of the war, a big industry. If you had money, they looked after you very well. Madame Long was a business woman. She immediately saw that my father could pay. Peace to her soul, but Madame Long was not very loved afterwards. She sent a stern teacher to my house, every day for two hours, a *répétitrice*, no musician. And from the age of 7 till 12 this lady taught me, because she apparently needed money. Then I had mademoiselle Sorin, another teacher who was very nice, who loved children and was a real pedagogue. And once a month there was a lady, being the queen, a professor of the conservatoire. Her name was mademoiselle Lejour. Later when I became a pedagogue I would do everything that they didn't do. They were power women, frustrated women, being at the limit of sadism. As a child I was a very natural player; I could move my fingers without thinking. But they would inoculate me with a sense of guilt. Whenever you did something well, they would change the fingering. I still have scores with three layers of fingerings, so they could be sure you would not get it right. Teaching in the forties and fifties was terrible; it was like a sort of punishment. I don't hold it against my parents, they tried to do their best, but when your child is gifted and you have money, the child becomes an object of consummation. And that is why I had so many private lessons, my teachers keeping me at that point where I could sink or swim."

But Marie Françoise remained motivated. "I think I have the character of someone who wanted to be different. And piano playing was my solution. So in a way I had my own territory, my own world. And my mother could not enter that, because it was mine. I think going to concerts was wonderful. And the fact that I went to a regular school was very helpful, I was very good, probably I was better at school than at piano. But gradually piano playing started to kill me. I was a very natural player when I was seven, eight, nine years old. But around eleven I started to become nervous. Because they had succeeded in inoculating me. Mademoiselle Lejour stole my life. She would make three of us play on three pianos the same Chopin study and she would put metronome marks on 72, 93, 94. How beautiful is that? And where emotion comes, I don't know. When I was sixteen, I had played all the fast movements of pieces, but I had never played a whole sonata. But there are still people like this. I don't know, but the French, they had an obsession with fingers. Fingers, fingers, fingers, keeping playing people against each other."

When Marie Françoise was twelve years old she entered the Paris Conservatoire, in *l'École préparatoire*.[1] Her teacher became Jean Doyen. She did not like him, never saw him play the piano. "He said: 'children should never play big works.' So I played all the secondary works, like Mendelssohn and Hummel. But never Schumann, never great works. Brahms and Schubert did not exist. Beethoven was considered too fast. Those teachers were mad. You know, we used to do rhythm, staccato, legato, I mean all those things which have nothing to do with music. We didn't know what a *développement* was, that was not important. Maybe tonality was important and solfège[2] was very important, because they pushed me into that kind of thing. When I would make a list of everything that I played as a child under fifteen it would turn out to be rubbish."

Doyen gave Marie Françoise private lessons at his home, which was actually officially forbidden. "When I was nearly fourteen, I said to my mother, 'I don't like my teachers, they are not musicians, they are bad.' My mother said, 'A child of thirteen and a half doesn't judge its teachers.' But I had a friend who was in the class of Yves Nat at the conservatoire. And I remember I played for Nat the Franck *Prelude, Chorale et Fugue*. I was going to be fourteen, it was in the summer and he said, 'What do you want to play?' And I said 'the Schumann Fantasy.' And he said, 'Okay, you come back in September and you play it for me.' At fourteen it was in reality a little bit too much, but I spent a marvellous summer. Of course I never played it to Mademoiselle Lejour."

Saviour came from the pianist Wilhelm Kempff. "I had a great chance, my mother who knew many people, had connections with Wilhelm Kempff. So I met him when I was thirteen. He heard me and he came to our house. And he said, 'those people are dramatic, they are rubbish.' How did I remain motivated, it might have been through Kempff. It was wonderful, because he would come to my home and play and he would listen to me and the fact that he thought I had talent gave me some hope. I won't tell of all the other teachers, because it was nothing, I have only bad memories. And I am not the only one, but I am one of the few who speak up."

Entering the class of Nat

"I spent a marvellous summer playing the Schumann Fantasy and I arrived in September at Yves Nat's lessons. By the way he didn't make me pay, which was very new to me, and he also said 'don't bring your mother.' So she was hurt, but I was delighted. He explained to me what the piece was about, why Schumann wrote it and so on. All of this when you are fourteen! I am sure that the way I played the Schumann Fantasy played a prominent role, pouring with sensitivity and sentimentalism. I was happy. And Nat said to me, 'you have a good technique, you are very good controller of the keyboard, but you don't use your ears.' For the first time someone talking about my ears! I now say to my students, 'you should have

ten ears. One ear for each finger.' When Nat said I could enter his class, I went out of the *Préparatoire* into *Supérieur*."[3]

Meanwhile Marie Françoise also went to secondary school. She did not attend full school, only during the mornings. A teacher of the school would live in the family's apartment and teach Marie Françoise every evening from 6 till 8 o'clock. School, being a private school, went very well, the girl being the first in the class, and Marie Françoise's mother negotiated when her daughter would and would not come. Marie Françoise liked school and did by no means want to leave it. "The school was eager to keep me and I wanted to go on because I had friends there. That was another point which was difficult, socially, because I belonged to a society that did not reflect what I experienced at the conservatoire. My mother would send a chauffeur to pick me up, which made me feel embarrassed. She said, 'say it is your uncle', but he looked too stupid to be my uncle."

When Marie Françoise was one month in Nat's class, he died. It was a great shock. "I then inherited a teacher who was a nightmare. He is still alive, so I don't want to talk about him. But he had lots of problems, especially affecting female students. After knowing a great artist you don't want to shrink, so I quit the conservatoire when I was sixteen. I turned over my tutor, never graduated there. Kempff then advised that I should go to Cortot at the *École Normale*. Looking back I must have been very strong, because I refused many things. Cortot was very conceited, snobbish, and I think he didn't like me. I must have been very unpleasant as well, refusing at the age of 15, 16 to play Beethoven's Opus 81 the way he wanted me to do it, because I knew Kempff didn't like that. I just said 'this is not possible, it is not the German way. Kempff told me how to do it and I won't change that.'" Unsurprisingly the lessons with Cortot would not last.

Wilhelm Kempff being the main thread

At least four times a year Marie Françoise saw Wilhelm Kempff. "He would listen to me and turn the key up, and he would tell me whether my instinct was right. I must say he was the best player I ever heard. He would come and play in my home, which is something I have been very privileged with. In my life I have always been so lucky, I became friends with people and colleagues and I kept those friendships and to some people I became very close. Together with Brendel, my friendship with Kempff is the most important thing in my life. Kempff was my guide, my protector, and my mother believed in him. My father didn't care, he was very nice, but he didn't care. Kempff had the authority to touch my (German) mother. He freed me from Mlle Lejour. He protected me from evil and I think probably he made me believe that I could do something. He also told me when I was fifteen, 'you must know all 48 preludes of Bach before you are twenty.' And I did. And I thank him for

it every day. It is things like this that make life different. He would come and have me sit down to practise and he would listen to me for two, three hours. Then, afterwards he said, 'you can play.' But more than criticizing my playing, he gave me targets; he gave me ideas about how to play. He was the first one to explain to me about sound, not explain verbally, but I heard it in his playing. He had incredible charisma. And he pushed me very much, because he organized a tour for me when I was sixteen. I went to Egypt, South Africa, playing a terrible overloaded programme. And actually we kept close until his death."

At the age of sixteen: leaving for Rome

Meanwhile sixteen years old, Marie Françoise decided she did not want to stay with Alfred Cortot in the École Normale, nor did she want to live with her parents anymore. "My parents were very generous, they were wonderful. I give them full credit. But I wanted to be free from the bourgeois French society. I went to a master class at the *Accademia Chigiana* in Siena and there I met a man, Carlo Zecchi, a student of Schnabel.[4] He was an artist, Mr. Kempff liked him. I always had that help, that identity card to say that I would write to Mr. Kempff and ask him. Zecchi offered me to come to Rome and enter *Santa Cecilia*."[5]

The main reason why Marie Françoise wanted to leave however, was that she had fallen in love with an artist living in Rome. "I said to my mother, 'it is very important that I get a diploma. I didn't get the diploma in Paris. I don't want to stay at l'École Normale, I want to learn languages, I want to learn culture, so I will go.' My mother accepted, but she accepted based on a big lie, because I told her that I was living in the house of a very well-known princess, a great *mecène* of the arts, but actually I lived with my boyfriend. I stayed for one year and a half and I was quite happy."

Back to Paris; study at the Sorbonne

Nevertheless in Italy Marie Françoise started doubting whether music was her future. "At that time you wouldn't consider being a teacher. Now most of my students accept that to make a living, you teach. But at that time you didn't. So I wanted to be independent. To have my own flat, my own life. And I wanted to travel, and I thought that being a pianist might not be the right thing." So Marie Françoise decided to start a study in psychology. "I went back from Rome to Paris and took an exam which was very difficult, but we musicians learn very quickly. So I worked a whole summer, because I had to pass this special exam to go to university without having the *baccalaureat*.[6] I passed the exam and I entered the faculty in Psychology."

In 1956 Marie Francoise entered the Sorbonne. She stayed for two years, and then the piano took over again. "We had a hospital training, for three months in Saint

Anne.[7] They thought I was good and I learned how to hypnotize. After two years I got a certificate."

Moving to Vienna, choosing for modern music and meeting Alfred Brendel
"For a while I then went to Vienna, with a scholarship. Vienna was very interesting, because I met Pablo Casals there. I played for Casals and that I will never forget. I played three Bach Preludes and Fugues. I played the C sharp minor fugue, and he told me 'that is the symbol of the Cross.' It was an incredible experience and I thought 'I am going to give up psychology. Music is music.' I think meeting Casals, and playing for him, the way he spoke about music, the way he *lived* music, was contagious."

In 1958 she won a second prize in a competition in Pozzoli, the first prize being won by Maurizio Pollini. "Neither of us knew the concerto[8], because we didn't think we would be finalists. The president of the jury at Pozzoli was called Mieczyslaw Horsowsky. He was a ninety year old teacher of Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. After the competition he came to me and he said, 'you know, you need training. If you want I can get you a scholarship for Vienna.' And I thought, 'Vienna, why not?' So I had to leave my boyfriend in Rome, it was the end of a life, but I chose music, because I was married to music. I went to Vienna, I got a scholarship, and my mother gave me money. I found a house, a Beethoven house in the Kalhenbergstrasse; there was a plaque, indicating that Beethoven had lived in this house for three months. It was quite something to arrive in Vienna, in 1958, and to be taken into the academy."

Marie Françoise liked the period she spent in Vienna. Her teacher, Seidelhofer, advised her to take up playing modern music. He brought her in contact with the work of the second Viennese school, Schoenberg and Berg, which she did not know, but which appealed a lot to her. The choice for modern music was fascinating for Marie Françoise: "this was very important to me, since the age of eleven, twelve, I had always been under the spell of someone. People like Kempff or Casals, I wanted to be like them. So by suddenly starting to play new music, or modern music, I was free. There was no reference. I was fresh and I could do things. At that time I was also very interested in visual arts. I read a lot, Rilke and Musil, for me it was a time of opening up on culture. Vienna was very important to me, it took me on the way to modern music and it also opened up a repertoire culture for me. I went to the opera every night, met musicians and conductors. I hated the Viennese but I loved the Viennese culture."

When she was in Vienna, Marie Françoise met the pianist Alfred Brendel, which resulted in a lasting deep friendship. "At that time he was not yet famous, and what many people don't know about Alfred is that when he was young he played a lot of new music. And so we sat down and he wrote in a diary all the pieces I should play

by the time I was thirty. All modern pieces. I think in the end I played 50 % of them."

Despite the scholarship she was often in need of money, and had to find additional work: "I didn't want to give piano lessons and I didn't want to do psychology, so I decided to become a cook. There was a cooking school in Vienna, quite famous. And because I had a French name, Marie Françoise Bucquet, they hired me to give classes, while I knew nothing! But the funny thing is that all my friends came to eat. Alfred is very persistent, saying that for three months they ate only soufflé, soufflé with chocolate, soufflé with artichokes, for everyone there I would make soufflé until they couldn't bear it anymore. But I made money like this."

Marie Françoise graduated at the Music Academy in Vienna in 1960. "And then I made a *faux pas* by getting married." Marie Françoise's first husband, whom she met through her mother, was a Russian Jew, who had both the English and German nationality and worked as a correspondent for The Observer. Her husband was 18 years her senior, and he had two sons from a former marriage, aged 13 and 15. After the marriage the couple left for Russia, and subsequently to the United States. The marriage was not a happy one. Officially it would last from 1960 till 1972.

Period in the USA

Marie Françoise and her husband settled in Washington, the children staying behind in Europe. Once in the USA, her career went extremely well. She gave many concerts, all with modern music. "I got exposed to a different world. First of all I met John Cage, who was very nice to me. I already had this label of being able to play modern music. Actually I played during these years, 1964, 1965, the Schoenberg concerto with Ormandy, I played with the Philadelphia Orchestra with Muti, I played the Berg *Kammerkonzert*, I played important things and gained much experience. I played all three Boulez sonatas and I learned a lot, building up a repertoire of new music."

Meanwhile she got an agent. Marie Françoise played in America under the name of Maria Kidel, "but it did not work. I wanted to become international. By marriage I also had a British passport."

After a two years' stay in the USA, Marie Françoise started longing for another focus in her life, and she decided to take up Psychology at New York University. In the end she earned a degree in psychology writing a master's thesis on 'Imitation in Education'. "I am very ashamed of that writing, it was really bad. It was written in English and it was well documented at the time. It made me free myself from imitation. A lot of my students, as well as a lot of people I meet imitate. Imitation is such a plague, such a sin, that it was good for me to write the paper; it showed the dangers of copying. I used music, fashion and especially behaviour and I used transfer. The mind has always been my hobby and my saviour. The funny thing is

that this piece of paper helped me to get a place in the Conservatoire later in 1986. Because at the conservatoire in Paris in order to be appointed you had to have a degree, even if someone else without a degree played better than you. Nothing to do with piano. So later on it helped me enormously with my musical career. The psychology study gave me the chance to take up study on reading, sightreading. And that helped me a lot to focus, capturing the essentials. It helped me with music. When I taught sightreading later on at the Paris Conservatoire it helped me explain to the students, 'this is a landmark, this is where you turn left, this is that'. I am grateful to this American training. I learned a lot in America. I learned how to plan, how to select, how to structure, which I was not told in France. But you have a hierarchy in everything you do in life. And also, maybe, thanks to these people, I also developed my memory."

Learning as a musician

Marie Françoise thinks she is a good learner, mainly because she is very curious. Next to French she speaks English, Italian and Spanish, she can read in German. Learning a score, or teaching her students to learn a score goes 'from exposure'. "I am very selective, and there is a hierarchy. I have a *one track mind*. Yesterday I read all day, twelve hours on Bartók. I read and then the rest of the world doesn't exist for me. I have a capacity for concentration, I developed that. So I have this capacity to grasp things. If you develop your memory, it is a big help. But you have to treat your memory well. I can't go out and buy milk and read about Bartók research. I have to stay there. Otherwise I would buy the wrong milk, because I am thinking about Bartók. The important thing about reading is that you clean your mind, you make rules for the essentials. I learn by comparison, by really making a choice from a number of possibilities. I also learn through human beings whom I select. I have always been an independent choice-maker, strong minded as Alfred (Brendel, RS) calls it. I have a strong intuition about what is not good for me. That has always protected me, and still now I use it too. I am very good at eliminating. It is a perfection and probably I survived because I knew how to reject."

Marie Françoise learned a lot from different composers throughout her life. "New music teaches you how to take risks and how to become true to the composer. I think the fact that I studied with so many composers, and good ones, who could tell me 'I don't like this and that' and very often were pinpointing, or selecting, what was important to them, was very fruitful for me. They needed not to be pianists; Berio for instance helped me a lot by teaching me how to shape things, how to make form. Cage liked the imaginary very much. Actually I was a disappointment to John Cage. He wrote *Etude Austral*, but I wouldn't play it for him, because I didn't understand. I was too down to earth. I remember going to his house where he had this very high ladder and he said, 'Can you climb this ladder? It is the way to know how to play. Think you are Alice in Wonderland.' I did play but I didn't like it,

actually it infuriated me. I also played for Stravinsky when I was a kid. He told me I should play his sonata as if I ate a tart apple. Just imagine, Cage told me to climb a ladder and Stravinsky told me to eat a tough apple."

Learning to teach; Fleischer's influence

Although Marie Françoise never learned to teach, later in her life she would become a very good teacher. The pianist Leon Fleischer played a major role in that. "There are people you cannot touch, because they have been my walls. One is Alfred Brendel and one is Leon Fleischer, who made me become a teacher and the third one is Pierre Boulez, who taught me how to be with students. I met Fleischer in Washington, in 1969. We had a common friend, who was the director of the Kennedy Center, who brought us together. I found Fleischer very conceited, the opposite of Alfred Brendel. I simply hated him, we did not get on. However, from 1974 on we had the same agent. She had told me that I could not go on playing only modern music, I had to combine it with more classical music. So I went to Fleischer and said to him, 'You must help me because I want to play Haydn and I cannot.' I had lost the sense of continuity and I felt weak. He said to me 'I will explain to you what is wrong with you,' and he said, 'the first thing to do is to get rid of Mr. Brendel, you don't have the same mental outfit. You are not the same.' Fleischer really helped me, not so much by playing, but by talking about music. He did something wonderful for me, by inviting me to come to Israel with him, where he would teach and play. So I went to Jerusalem with him, for one month, and at night we would sit and discuss the students we had heard. And at the end he said, 'now you are ready to be a teacher.' I had watched like two hundred hours of his teaching and that taught me a lot. Fleischer is a good teacher, interested in individuals. Through him I got a lot of engagements as a teacher, he sent me students and some of my best students I shared with him. He has a sense of dynamic, a sense of vision, of who the student can become. He is inimitable, because he changes with every person. He is really a visionary on teaching. I think that often teachers make the wrong mixture between taking power over students and teaching. Teaching is not taking power over somebody. I hate that. You must know that sometimes it can take students a week and sometimes six months, you never know when it comes, but you must be there. You must be able to transform your relationship into something your students require. Fleischer wants his students to develop as human beings, as individuals, and I think I learned that from him. I don't own students, I don't think one should, one should help people to find their identity musically and emotionally. Most of my good students I got from Fleischer, but they played for others as well, they play for whoever they want. I am not their only teacher."

Marie Françoise came back to Europe in 1974, but stayed as an *artist in residence* in the USA. Till 1978 she lived in Greece, Germany, Paris, but also in Singapore, Hong

Kong and the USA. Her friend Maurice Floret was influential in her choice of leaving the USA. He brought her into contact with the composers Stockhausen, at whose house she spent a month, Xenakis and Berio.

Back in Europe, marriage and a child - shift of career

In 1976 Marie Françoise met her current husband, the Portuguese singer Jorge Chaminé. Her life took another turn, for the better. They would get married in 1978. In 1980 a daughter was born.

Her daughter's birth marked an important change in Marie Françoise's career. She decided to stop all the travelling and concerts, realising that combining a concert career with raising her daughter would be impossible. Her manager reacted nastily to the birth of Marie Françoise's daughter, which annoyed Marie Françoise beyond words. "I had to make choices. One day she asked me to replace Pollini in Palermo on a Thursday. So I played the Thursday in Palermo and the Friday in Baltimore, which means, that given the time difference, I played the same day."

The focus definitely shifted to teaching: in 1983 Marie Françoise was appointed at the Conservatoire de Paris. "I don't know if I regret this, but I choose to cut off my performing career when my daughter was born. I was forty-three when she was born, both my daughter and my husband were very important to me and I had a compete pleasure in making music and sharing music with my husband. And to travel…it was very hard; I had this career for twenty years. I earned more money, that is true. And then I became a teacher in the Paris Conservatoire, and that was a decision. I cut off America, I cut off this life, I cut off performing. And actually did I do well or not? That I don't know. I got very good students at the conservatoire and I had a lot of pleasure, but I am not sure I did as much as I had done before."

The period at the Conservatoire de Paris

At the Paris Conservatoire Marie Françoise became professor of piano pedagogy and chamber music. Upon retirement, three years ago, she had delivered 93 graduates, with many of whom she is still in touch. Also at the Paris Conservatoire she showed her strong mindedness: "In the conservatoire I influenced the curriculum. Nobody played Haydn or Scarlatti when I came in, which is mad. They still played a lot of secondary music. They also played from bad editions. So I had the chance to be very American in my behaviour, 'speak up, don't mumble'. I would go to the director, Marc-Olivier (Dupin, RS), he really believed in me, we had a very good relationship. Actually he offered me to become a piano teacher, but I didn't want to be a piano teacher only. Because sixty percent of the people who enter the conservatoire, are not going to have a career. So that didn't interest me. Marc-Olivier gave me a free hand. He was okay, he knew about music, he was a musician. The others were terrible. I was in the *Conseil d'Administration* of the conservatoire, being the representative of the teachers. The teachers were stupid,

they didn't know I had power. My colleagues had no idea when they elected me. Using your influence, that you learn in America. In Paris, students are so scared of their teachers, who are God. Now that I have retired, I say to students 'don't go to the conservatoire.' In Paris piano playing has to be *clean* at any cost. Cleanliness is the most important. So you must teach your student strategically in order not have him to fail in front of a jury. Also often I felt that good editions were not considered important. For me to play the Mozart C minor Fantasy in a bad edition is impossible, I would just send people home. But in the Conservatoire it does not matter. They play Schubert with mistakes. They don't care. This is again the hierarchy. If students play the wrong notes, it is very dramatic. Fleischer once was very funny, because when he came to give a master class in Paris he said, 'you don't play wrong notes, but you play wrong sounds. That is very ugly.' And the teacher was furious. But Fleischer was right. They were wrong, horrible sounds. You have to teach them those ugly sounds in Paris, otherwise they will not pass the competition or the exam. My answer to that is that I don't care if somebody misses a round. So actually I was a bit cheating."

Two important influences: Pierre Boulez and the Amadeus Quartet

Marie Françoise met the composer and conductor Pierre Boulez in 1968 in Basel. Through him she got a contract with Philips in the Netherlands, to register seven recordings with modern music between 1969 and 1978. She won an Edison award with it. Marie Françoise stayed in contact with Boulez, although they did not become close friends.

"I learned how to teach, because he is a great teacher, I learned how to listen, I learned how to construct an interpretation, and I also learned from him how to be coherent. Coherence is something in a performance which is very important. It can be on several levels. He insisted on coherence: how you build your performance, like a composer. He knows how to make a score live. And how not to cheat, and also how not to get too obsessed with the expression of self. Coherence is to keep matters in hand, under control. He taught me that. I think he taught me how to tame myself. I read everything he writes."

The Amadeus quartet was of great influence to Marie Françoise in the seventies. Where she had played solely modern music in the sixties, she switched to playing more classical music in the seventies. "I had premiered a lot of works which were written either for me or written newly. That was a completely different job. In 1972 I went back to classical music and the Amadeus quartet came a lot here in 1974, '75 and '76. I went with them to Nepal on tour. I played for them, they helped me and kind of parented me into Haydn and Beethoven. Kempff was not interested at that time and he was old too. He would not spend four hours listening to you. Whereas the Amadeus Quartet, especially the viola player, helped me a lot, with style, with getting reconciled with the music. So they really were my godfathers. They came to

my concerts and they pushed me and they clapped. During my first recital at the *Théatre des Champs Elysées* where I played Haydn they were in a box and they clapped like mad. That was nice and important to me."

After retirement: Academy in Italy and teaching private students
Retirement from the conservatoire is one thing, full retirement is another thing and for Marie Françoise that is not at stake. Since she was pensioned from the Paris Conservatoire she started, together with her husband, an academy for pianists and singers in their house in Italy. The academy takes place four times a year, the one over Christmas being the most popular. "It has a beautiful view, it's a beautiful spot. I shop between seven and eight and make sure the food is all there for twenty-one people. They love being together, eating a lot of food and getting drunk. There are famous and less famous musicians. We select people who get on well together; we have all nationalities. I have three pianos; I have room for twenty-one, ten bedrooms. The course is seven days, but people can stay for two more days. They pay thirty euro a day, which is not very much. It is a very good concept. My husband and I teach and they play concerts. The visitors are people who have careers and they give concerts. Some of them are also invited to the festival, which we have in the summer in a beautiful place, Monte Argentario."

At present Marie Françoise has about twenty private students. She still performs, mostly by accompanying recitals of her husband. She considers to perform more, but is hesitant about it: "Fleischer was very mean with me. He said that if I stopped performing, one would hear it in my teaching. So he wants me to go back. And it is time. To be honest, many of my students play better than me. I do practise and play for them and they play for me, but they play better than me."

An ever remaining curiosity
"All my life I learned. Composers taught me to think of how it is done. Intimacy with composers, work with them has been so important. I played a lot for composers, for non-pianists, for conductors and for singers. Kempff kept on saying, 'you must know all Schubert songs in order to know how to play Schubert.' And I knew twenty. Now I know two hundred, thanks to my husband and my teachers. I am reading very much about Busoni. And I learned yesterday from Bartók's essays, that Bartók wanted his students to play Scarlatti. I was glad. When I met Kirkpatrick[9] I learned from him about Scarlatti. And I worked with William Christie[10] at the Conservatoire. So I always learned. I don't think my appetite at my age is finished. I might play Schoenberg again, but I am not sure; I have changed and I don't think I want to play things I used to play. Or record these things. I am known to have a one track mind and I am very obsessive. I found some quotes from Mozart that are incredible. Mozart said already before Chopin said it, that his right

hand was free, but his left hand didn't give way. He wrote this! And then he said that Italy had cantabile, which flew like olive oil, on the contrary to Mannheim! I am still discovering. Today, for instance, I was reading Bartók, he wrote, and I didn't know that, that one should play Rameau. I don't know Rameau, so I look up Rameau. I like to do things that great men did. I think they are my teachers. Bartók's wife told me something wonderful which I use a lot. When she was his student he said, 'You don't have to play the bar line for me, because the bar line does not exist.' And most students play the bar line. Don't you think it is a good remark? Bartók said the same to his students about Beethoven: 'Don't play the bar line for me. It is not written.' Beautiful, isn't it? So these things I treasure. Like Schoenberg who said 'Ich bin der Schüler von Mozart.'"

Looking back, Marie Françoise feels satisfied. She is in good shape: "I have a good body relationship. I understand my body language, therefore I never take medication and the first time I went to hospital was to have my daughter. And apparently as far as piano technique goes, I have a very natural way of playing. Which the French tried to destroy, but which I resisted."

"My daily life and my musical life blended. And actually the people I love most are musicians. Even Mr. Kempff, although we had a difficult relationship. The last time I saw him, he had a kind of Alzheimer. I went to see him together with my husband, whom he liked very much. Kempff was there with two nurses, he looked at me and didn't recognise me. And then he said, 'get me my camera', and he made a picture of me. Then I left and I felt quite sad. But in the evening he looked at the picture and he said: 'Marie Françoise. I recognized her, but she must pay for everything she did to me. So I pretended that I didn't recognise her.' Funny, isn't it?"

Interview held January 23, 2006 in Paris

1 Preparatory course of the Conservatoire de Paris.
2 Ear training.
3 Study at the Conservatoire de Paris.
4 Arthur Schnabel, pianist (1882 – 1951).
5 Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia: Music Academy in Rome.
6 Diploma of secondary school.
7 Well-known psychiatric hospital in Paris.
8 Often a mandatory concerto with orchestra has to be performed by finalists of a competition.
9 Ralph Kirkpatrick (1911 – 1983), harpsichordist, editor of Scarlatti's works.
10 Leader of the famous Baroque ensemble *Les Arts Florissants.*

Yonty Solomon

Yonty Solomon has enjoyed a distinguished worldwide career in recitals, concertos and chamber music. His extensive repertoire includes the complete Bach 48 Preludes and Fugues, and Goldberg Variations, all 32 Beethoven Piano Sonatas, the entire piano music of Ravel, Debussy, Janacek and Ives, as well as a broad spectrum of romantic and contemporary music. Richard Rodney Bennett, Sorabji and a number of other composers have dedicated works to Solomon, who has given numerous first performances. After graduating with highest distinction in both Music and Psychology at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, he continued his studies with Dame Myra Hess, Guido Agosti and Charles Rosen, winning several major piano competitions, including the Harriet Cohen Beethoven Medal. Yonty Solomon has been soloist throughout the world with many of the most important symphony orchestras. Also with the Solomon Trio he performed at La Scala, Milan, Geneva, Birmingham Symphony Hall, and the South Bank, London, as well as in Germany, Spain and Italy. He has played duo recitals with many leading musicians, including Mstislav Rostropovich. He has recorded for Decca, Philips, Altarus, Carlton, BBC and other labels. Solomon has worked as musical advisor on television and several films. Yonty Solomon was elected Fellow of the Royal College of Music in London, where he is currently professor of piano. He also is a professor at Trinity College of Music, London and recently elected President of the Alkan Society.

One should not be preoccupied with just reproducing the notes or text of the music. I like finding different meaningful layers, for a complete perception and vision of the work. That attitude is a kind of key for me.

By sheer coincidence Yonty Solomon was born in Cape Town, South Africa. Both his parents were Lithuanian, and they lost most of their family during the Second World War. "Actually the family of my mother was almost completely wiped out and most of my father's. They fled from Lithuania hoping to arrive in America but for some reason the boat did not sail to New York, but to South Africa, to Cape Town, without even informing the passengers on board. My parents landed in Cape Town but the rest of the remaining family had escaped just before to New York."

Yonty was born in 1937, six months after they arrived, as the youngest of seven children, "on May 6, the same date as Sigmund Freud, my second piano teacher Cameron Taylor at the University of Cape Town and also of Moshe Feldenkrais, whose teaching and work I am passionate about. It is a special date." Yonty was born premature and when some months later he became ill with diphtheria was kept in hospital for several weeks before he was allowed home.

Family life in Cape Town

Yonty's parents worked hard to build up a life with their seven children in Cape Town. Of course they did not immediately master the English or Afrikaans languages and usually conversed in Lithuanian and Russian. But the family did not find Cape Town a bad place to be. His mother was at home, taking care of the family and his father started as a cabinet maker. "He made marvellous furniture, really *art deco*, he was very talented with wood and used even to make violins as well. He built up a substantial business in furniture. Then at some point he walked out, which turned out to be a big mistake. He was a man of great principles and rather impetuous, and started out on his own again making machinery. He had a natural and almost intuitive engineering proficiency, I don't think he ever studied it, but he was remarkably good at building machines and devising all sorts of fascinating equipment. He was a very warm, caring man. He loved to take me around and was very proud of me."

Yonty had three sisters and three brothers. "There was a big age difference between us, but we were an extremely close family, a happy family. My mother with matriarchal wisdom and constant affection kept us close together. My parents were of course Jewish and later became quite religious, which I am not."

Yonty's mother died in 1978 and his father a few years later, always having continued to live in South Africa. As a child Yonty always felt that his father had had "a really hard time" during a brief period of war imprisonment in Germany, the details which were never divulged to the children. "Old photos of my father in uniform are impressive and make him look a somewhat serious man but he loved excellent company and like my mother revelled in telling humorous and touching stories of life in Lithuania and the older generation who had sadly perished there."

An extraordinary childhood with music

Yonty's brother Elia, who was seven years older, played the piano. Yonty started to play the piano when he was three years old. "My brother was very interested in music but he never took it up seriously. We both played by ear. I was a kind of *Wunderkind.* I got the inspiration from my brother who had this huge record collection of jazz and classical music. And of course my family used to listen to all kinds of music all the time, on the ordinary 78 discs. We had a small jazz piano, it was one of those instruments like you see in movies, a very low upright piano, with lights at either sides, like an American showbizz piano; my father must have bought it somewhere and I played it for years until I was sixteen. I played entirely jazz as a child; when I was four, five years old I used to tour South Africa, being called the *Boogie Woogie* king of South Africa. I was very much influenced by jazz pianists like Earl Hines and Art Tatum, 'Pinetop' Smith and by the wonderful jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald. I only improvised. I could not read music at all. At the age of eight my

parents thought it was time for me to start learning the piano seriously, but I did not want to. I was a rather precocious kid. I took part in several talent competitions, like *Stars of Tomorrow*. I played a lot, used to go to Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Durban and at a certain moment I became a bit exploited by people. I also played with jazz bands. It seems most curious to think back of this today, like I was another person. I became very well-known as a child performer and I probably was very good. However I was always in an adult environment and did not have very much of a childhood. My parents were very caring, as a family we were very supportive of each other. I was the youngest, so I was rather spoilt. I remember that around the age of eleven, I suddenly started to feel guilty that I was always the centre of attraction and not the others, so I tried my utmost to be nice to everybody. I think I even overdid it. Everybody wanted to hear me play. I used to sing the pop songs of the day as well. I played on big entertainment occasions, for example when I was nine I played in Port Elisabeth at the opening of a huge swimming pool, where they built a special platform over the water on which I was playing on an illuminated white baby grand piano. I used to tour around with people in their shows, and being one of the acts. At the age of about fourteen my parents decided it was getting out of hand. It was not disturbing school, because school went extremely well. But they thought it was time to leave all this behind because I did not get very much of a childhood at all. It was like another life; at school people did not realise, until I won a big talent competition and suddenly I became a celebrity in the school. My school work always came first, because my parents wanted me to have a very good education, which I had, thank God. I also kept having a closely-knit family life."

Yonty's brother Elia was extremely important for him. "He has been a huge influence in my life. He was quite marvellous, very special indeed; he was very interested in classical music, which I later became as well. I played *La Campanella* of Liszt, or Brahms' Hungarian Dances. I could play it quite accurately I think. I had good aural facility and a very accurate memory. I would listen to the music once or twice, and then I would know it by heart as they say."

Educational pathway

Yonty went to an Afrikaans primary school, so his education was basically in that language. After primary school he went to an exclusive private school, the South African College, but when his father lost his business, Yonty had to change school because that rather elite school became too expensive to afford. He then went to another Afrikaans school.

At this school Yonty met a wonderful teacher called Rita Herbst, who would become his very first official teacher in music. "She was a classical pianist and a very fine elegant lady. She taught in our school in the village where we had gone to live, called Parow, just about fifteen miles from Cape Town. She heard me play one day, and immediately contacted my parents, asking them how it was possible that I

could not read music. My parents were interested when she suggested that I try music as a subject. So I started with her and she taught me extraordinary things, like reading music really well, starting with key-signatures with plenty of sharp and flats. I did not start playing scales from C major. She had an amazing capacity for giving you information, lots of important wise pianistic information. In about three months I could read surprisingly well and I was learning very advanced pieces. Of course I had also listened to many great recordings. My brother had recordings with Dinu Lipatti[1] playing the Chopin Barcarolle and Ravel's *Alborada del gracioso*[2], which I now play very much, which all have belonged to the permanent key works of my life. He loved the *Goldberg Variations* by Bach with Wanda Landowska playing this on the harpsichord[3], and in many ways this became almost the most important piano work that I have ever studied and played."

Within a year Yonty played concertos with orchestra. "I kept having lessons with Rita Herbst at school, just once a week; I did not have private lessons. I gained a great empathy for the Bach 48 Preludes and Fugues[4] and I learned a good deal of substantial repertoire, the B flat minor Sonata and etudes by Chopin and Beethoven sonatas for example. I learned quite quickly. In my last year at school I played the Haydn D major Concerto and the Bach Concerto in D minor. I was advised to continue studying the piano after leaving school. But my parents were against it, so they decided it was enough and that I should hopefully do medicine instead."

One month of study in medicine; the shift to music study

"I kind of enrolled in medicine and I did a little bit of that in Cape Town. About less than one month later I decided to take part in a competition for an important music scholarship, just for fun. But then totally unexpectedly I actually won it!"

Yonty was awarded this major scholarship to study music at Cape Town University. His parents were pleased for him, but they insisted that he would study something different in addition, and the only subject that fitted in Yonty's schedule was Psychology, so that became the choice.

When Yonty went to University he was seventeen years old, "everything happened actually quite naturally." He did not blame his parents for a minute about their wishes: "I think I would have been a good doctor. I am sorry perhaps in some way. I still have a tinge of regret. But one has to make a definite decision, you cannot do everything." Yonty started both psychology and music at the same time; he would also graduate in both.

"I won the scholarship, and I decided that it would be fun to play the piano. I loved to play the piano, I loved being with people who were musicians. In those days of my year I later became the only BMus student, I had a lot of tuition on my own, which was a good thing, I was very fortunate. There was a marvellous dean of faculty, Dr. Erik Chisholm, from Glasgow, quite famous and he had invited people like Szymanovski, Hindemith and Bartók to Scotland in the 1930s. And I had a

wonderful professor, Cameron Taylor. He was perceptive and wise, because he left me alone to find my own path. He knew that I could do it. I learned complicated scores very quickly. Then a well-known English pianist came to South Africa, Kendall Taylor, who was a close friend of my teacher. He taught at the Royal College in London for a long time and actually much later we taught there together, still a little bit overlapping. So he came to Cape Town and I played for him and then he said: 'Of course you have to be a pianist, there is no question about it.' So that set the seal for everything."

The choice for Europe

"I was very fortunate because I performed frequently. Dr. Chisholm was marvellous, organising many evening concerts, with all the Mozart piano concertos, and much of the rather unusual rare repertoire, like for example music of Janacek, Schoenberg, and many others. Dr. Chisholm was very searching intellectually but also really rather idiosyncratically eccentric. From then on I studied exclusively classical music and I really basically stopped playing jazz, that is to say almost completely; I would do it just for fun. In my last year of BMus I knew that I should go to Europe; I had completed all my exams with distinction, won several scholarships and so on. Then in 1959 I won another very large scholarship at the University of Cape Town, the *Sir Robert Kotze Scholarship* usually given to a scientist or to a mathematician or someone from medical school and now for the first time it was given to a musician. It was a substantial amount of money; I could really go overseas. But at that time I did not know whom I wanted to study with; I had fantasies of Alfred Cortot[5], but he died, then I wanted to study with Walter Gieseking[6], but he died as well, that was extraordinary. Then Michelangeli[7] came to South Africa and our singing teacher at Cape Town University was Italian and he had the idea that I should play to Michelangeli, but I was very shy and eventually did not meet or play to him, so I am glad that I did not go to study with him, because he would not have been ideally suited for me. Then at my BMus final recital when I performed a monumental programme, consisting of the Goldberg Variations, the Liszt Sonata, Ravel's *Gaspard de la Nuit*[8], and the Chopin F minor Ballade and Barcarolle, there was a composer called Howard Ferguson, an Irish composer, in the audience. He was doing a tour of South Africa, he heard me play and then he came backstage, I did not even know that he was in the audience. He said: 'Whom are you going to study with?' I said: 'I have absolutely no idea'. I did not want to go to an institution, not to the Royal Academy or the Royal College.[9] I had already been at a university and I then wanted a personal communication. I don't know why I felt that, but I did feel that quite powerfully. And he said: 'Would you like to study with Dame Myra Hess?' I knew of her, because we had a recording of her playing Franck and Schumann works, and I thought he was kidding me. And I said: 'Of course! I would absolutely love to!' And amazingly the very next morning my parents had an international

phone call from Myra Hess in London, telling them she was willing to take me on as her pupil."

Study in London with Myra Hess

In the academic year of 1959/1960 Yonty went to London to study with Myra Hess. "She taught at home. She lived in St. John's Wood, just behind Lord's Cricket Ground and she had a beautiful spacious home with two Steinway *grands.* She was getting quite elderly at that time, she also had arthritis. In this stage of her life she taught only a very few pianists. Lots of people claimed later they studied with her, but I very much doubt that. I adored her. She was wonderfully special. I felt immensely privileged and slightly in awe of her."

What made it so special to him? "She rarely ever spoke about technique per se, it was all in and about the music, creating the right sound, the deeper philosophical and emotional ideas in the music, a responsible and with humility understanding of what you are doing; the spiritual communion with music and the piano which she had. It was not anything like the teaching in an institution. You played and she gave you the greatest advice. The most profound thing was the sound. She had the most wonderful sound, intense, she had the natural ability to create the most perfect effortless kind of sonorities. She did not have a big virtuoso technique, well of course it *was* a big technique, because she played Brahms concertos, but it was not *bravura* per se. She used to have a youthful virtuoso technique, but when she became older she became rather serious in the idea that one should not play with a big ostentatious technique but be a profound and searching musician. The ideas I got from her were the things she did in her own playing; we all have very personal ideas about voicing of chords, shaping the melodic line, feeling for interval, the sort of feeling for the large. She used to speak about the great line in music, a sort of logic, as a tension which relaxes, and she was marvellous at this. She understood Beethoven and Mozart extraordinarily in a way that goes beyond any level of teaching. And the very fact that she spontaneously demonstrated at the piano quite a lot was incredibly valuable for me. My very first lessons were marvellous and magical. It was a Saturday afternoon in winter after I had arrived just two or three days before that, and she had invited me to tea at three o'clock in the afternoon. I came, she asked me to play and I played Beethoven op. 110, which I had been studying. She paid me a compliment and said 'That is the real thing', and 'I am very happy'… she was wonderful to me. And then miraculously we played the Schumann Concerto in A minor on two pianos. She was famous for it, and she accompanied me on the second piano. Possibly the early lessons before my fellow student Stephen (Bishop, RS) came, the first six months, were the best. It was slightly different when he came, he was younger than I was and somehow the relationship with her had become a bit different. But she was always wonderfully generous to me, and very thoughtful, very caring. She would just phone you. You

would not have fixed lessons every Thursday or whatever. You had to wait and you would not go out. She would phone you and say, 'I will see you today at two o'clock', and you knew you had to go at two o'clock. She was astonishingly inspiring. It was also her presence; you felt 'I am here with someone who is really a great artist'. Myra was a superlative unique pianist. The simplicity and truthfulness of her communication was fascinating; she would not talk in fancy terms and everything she said had a kind of cogent musical and philosophical reason. Usually she taught and thought like a conductor, or like a chamber musician, it was not as a pianist only. I did a lot of Beethoven sonatas with her and Mozart concertos, much Chopin, Ravel and Bach. She used to demonstrate things like how to shape a phrase or highlighting a telling interval or chord or a particular touch. What was interesting about her was the avoidance of using unnecessary force. Today many pianists seem to force the piano and that for her was anathema. So the sound and the voicing of chords were critical. To her playing the piano was singing. She often said: 'You cannot be a great pianist without being a great person'. So one felt at a very high level of privileged human communication."

Yonty Solomon describes Dame Myra Hess as a 'quite daunting personality'. "She was very kind to me; she gave me Kathleen Ferrier's piano for seven years. It was a beautiful piano, which Ms. Ferrier had left to Myra."

Yonty studied with Myra Hess for nearly three years. In the end things started to become more tense. "She used to go on tour very often. Then in the final year of my studies during the last tour she did, she wanted me and Stephen to play to Howard Ferguson. For personal reasons I did not want to do that, I felt really uncomfortable with him. She was absolutely furious and unforgiving with me, and the last six months with her were not easy or comfortable. She never asked for the reasons. She just thought I was very wilful and I became quite distressed with the situation that arose. She was friendly with Howard, very close over many years, and indeed they were both very kind to me, taking me to the opera, ballet and to concerts. Most of the lessons she did not charge me for. But eventually she did; I had this scholarship. She used to charge me 23 pounds an hour. If it went over an hour, even five minutes, it was 46 pounds. In those days 23 pounds was quite a lot of money; for 50 pounds you could buy a little piece of sculpture or painting. But she was very kind and very caring. I was very fortunate and have always appreciated the gift of having studied with Myra."

Yonty felt at home in London, and was not at all lonely. "I shared an apartment with a friend from South Africa who was at the Royal Academy studying the organ, piano and conducting. We used to go to concerts together. And there were several South Africans around, like an actress I was friends with for many years. Almost every night I would go to concerts, or to theatre, standing at the back, at the

cheapest places possible. It was a wonderful, exciting time. I was always interested in plants, so I used to go frequently to Kew Gardens. London was very different to what it is today. There was not a huge competition among musicians then, like nowadays, when making a career in music was, and still is, quite a daunting task."

He finished studying with Myra Hess in the year 1961/1962 and went back to South Africa, not knowing what he would be going to do. Myra Hess died in 1965.

Building a career

After a few months in South Africa it was clear to Yonty that he had to go back to Europe. "I did a long concert tour with a violinist and I played some recitals. And then after a few months I decided there was no point of me being in South Africa at all and I wanted to come to London permanently. All I could have done in South Africa is teaching. My parents said again that I should do medicine; it was obviously always at the back of their mind. But I wanted to perform, although I had never taken that aspect of my life overly seriously. I was not hugely ambitious, I did not want a career of a hundred concerts a year. My brother Elia was very keen that I went to live in London, he was marvellously encouraging to me. Unfortunately he did not like to travel, he never visited me later in London. Once back in London I tried continuing playing and I was very lucky. In 1964 I went on a tour of 35 concerts in America. It was exhausting, and all the time I was on my own, driving in greyhound buses and getting on planes and I finally decided really that this was not for me. Things nevertheless fell into place; I seemed to meet the right people, like Anthony Craxton from television. Through him I got quite a few television engagements. I had a lot of concerts. I found an agent, who was very good to me and took into account what I wanted. I did not want to have a career of running around and playing and playing. I am definitely not a one-focused person at all. I always have been interested in other things, in literature and art particularly, I think that that is fundamentally important for all musicians. When one is going to teach one cannot just teach the piano, you teach about everything, about life. You are meant to be a kind of Renaissance person. I did not teach at that time. I only started teaching later. I taught for fun from time to time, but I did not charge anyone, because I think I learned more from this experience than my pupils."

A drastic change in life

"In 1977 my life changed quite dramatically. I had to make decisions and I had to take a teaching job. For seventeen years I had lived with my partner, whom I met in 1961 in South Africa, and in 1977 the whole thing came unexpectedly to an end. For me it was a disaster. It happened so suddenly. We were very close, it took me about twelve years to get over it. I was on tour in South Africa and he met somebody else, and I did not know about it. I wish I had not discovered it. My distress was more about emotion than finances. But I had to leave the house, everything changed and

many things came to an end. My partner had always been very caring and enthusiastic, kind and encouraging, very keen that I would have a good career. He was more ambitious for me than I was myself. He was a lawyer; a lot of his clients were movie stars, he was a close friend of celebrities, but I did not want to be part of it, I could not take it too seriously, it was not that important for me. Many of these people who became friends came to my concerts. I was not that interested in show business people. My partner and I had very different values. I have always been a very personal person, happy being on my own. It was difficult, quite hard. It was a year of great unfolding drama. I had to move and build up things again from scratch and I knew I would have to take on teaching as well. Fortunately I had shared a small house in Devon, so at some point I bought an apartment in London. Thank God it happened when it did. It was good for me. Terrible things happen in one's life and one somehow learns and grows from it. I managed. Life changed and it went smoothly and well. I became interested in things like the Moshe Feldenkrais method.[10] I desperately needed those things in my life. One searches for answers. One meets people who introduce you to other people and then things change. Many new ideas actually came to me only after I had to leave Hampstead. I also became very interested in hypnotherapy, self-hypnosis and yoga. There was this wonderful lady called Betty Gordon, who used to be my Scottish agent, and she understood everything and she looked after me. Unfortunately she died five years ago. There were wonderful people being friendly towards me. I knew that I needed and wanted to change from the past. Everything became calm and enjoyable and I have been lucky, for which I am very happy and ever grateful."

Music was of a great help in this period, it was comforting. "It is an island of sanity. It was just extraordinary. It is a steep learning curve. I am glad it happened. It took me a long time to realise that life is about other things, about key people."

Another traumatic experience

In 1991 Yonty's apartment caught fire. "It started upstairs and if it weren't for my dog called Sotheby I would not be alive. I was asleep and he was barking like crazy. I had entertained six students for dinner the evening before and I would be heading for the Royal College the next morning. I could just escape in time, went out with my dog, a painting and two small pieces of bronze sculpture. Thank God the fire brigade came fast. You cannot imagine what this experience is. I aged overnight through that. Afterwards I had to live for a year in a mess because the insurance would not pay. In the end I had to pay for everything myself. There were problems with that flat. People were complaining about the noise from my piano playing, so I left eventually. Somehow things in my life that have not been happy then result in the end in very much better things. I then bought this house, thank God."

Yonty's teachers

"Myra was a kind of pinnacle. I worshipped Myra. A great deal of what I teach is from Myra, all her ideas and the ideas that she inspired. So I think in a way she has been more meaningful to me than anybody else in my life. Cameron Taylor was a good practical teacher, I was with him for three and a half years and he was excellent because he understood what I was capable of doing and he gave me big repertoire, he would expect me to learn all Chopin etudes in three months. I had for a short time another superb teacher, Guido Agosti. That was about 1963. He taught privately in Rome, but I was with him in the *Accademia Chigiana* in Siena and then he invited me to come to Italy to study with him. He did not charge me for the lessons, and I had altogether some twelve lessons with him. They were really wonderful, kind of seminal lessons; at that time I was playing the complete Ravel. It was great, I was in Rome on my own and it was an interesting time. Agosti was an erudite sophisticated man, very elegant, very self-contained, but he had a marvellous sort of refined musical sense, he understood me very well and he was always very encouraging to me. He was cultured and intellectual but also rather cold; there was nothing paternally warm about him, but I loved that. I did not need to be touched by personal interaction. What he did was so brilliantly refined and it had so much noble character. He was really a quintessential Renaissance man, reading great literature, speaking several languages fluently and having an encyclopaedic knowledge of music and piano playing. He did not have a big career as a pianist because he was surprisingly very nervous. He apparently never played at his best in public. I cannot understand why. Then in the period between 1968 and 1970 I had a few fantastically inspiring lessons with Charles Rosen, the American pianist, who wrote such marvellous books. I was very fortunate because I knew him quite well. Rosen and I had the same agent. My agent thought I should have a period of study. So I went to Sacramento in the USA. He again did not charge me for lessons. I did not have that many lessons with Charles, I think about ten in a period of three weeks. I played *Gaspard de la Nuit* to him and the Brahms *Paganini Variations*. He was very welcoming to me, very decent. I sometimes stayed for dinner. He is an acutely intellectual person. But one does not get close to Charles. I would not say he was the most influential teacher in my life."

Key persons

Yonty speaks about 'key persons' that everyone needs in his or her life: "I was fortunate because in one's life there have to be key personalities who can lead you on and somehow contribute to a line that goes wherever it is and I, thank God, was so fortunate."

One of the key personalities was his brother Elia, who had been always so loving and supportive. Yonty heard the news of Elia's death by a car crash while he was in

Sacramento in his short period of study. "My brother was amazing, very good looking, he dealt in art. His business was in South Africa. He had the most wonderful collection of paintings. Unfortunately when he died a lot of it was stolen, my parents were so devastated they could not go to the house, they just couldn't face all the memories. So the whole collection crumbled." Yonty is certain that the relationship he had with his brother has to do with his big love of art. "I have collected paintings since 1960. I used to be passionate about it. I went to every exhibition, to auctions and so on. In a way that passion, even obsession went into my music as well. My teachers talked about art, about literature. Like them in my teaching I try to relate to many levels of art."

Key persons for Yonty's development as an artist are many, but to him in the first place that is Myra Hess. "I have got to thank all my teachers."

Since five years Yonty lives with his new partner Rowan. "Rowan is South African but we have met in London. We have lived together for over five years. He is not a musician, but he knows…boy does he know about piano playing. He really has an uncanny instinct for that. He has been just incalculably great to me. I think I have been very fortunate."

The Solomon Trio and Kaikhosru Sorabji

Yonty has always played a lot of chamber music, including playing in a piano trio, called the Solomon Trio. The Solomon Trio was very successful, giving many concerts and making recordings and lasted for four years. "But unfortunately the violinist and cellist did not get on that well and that was that. But again that was not a serious problem, because other things happily came in its place."

Performing the works of the composer Kaikhosru Sorabji[11] was of great importance for Yonty. "In 1976 I tried to come into contact with the legendary Sorabji because I was very passionate about playing his work. He was a very esoteric composer and his work is majestic and uniquely extraordinary. He endorsed the contact and that was very helpful to me. He allowed only two people to play his music at the time, and I was the first."[12]

In a series of recitals in London Yonty premiered a number of Sorabji's piano works which made the public's interest in Sorabji grow. "I had great success with this music. We did a big television programme in which I appeared and played. His music is ultra difficult, it is a fusion of different Eastern music styles and at the same time highly contrapuntal and always hugely creative. That was very special to me. I met him only three times. He used to phone me and always be concerned about me. I used to be shy to phone him because I did not want to intrude on his cherished privacy. I am kind of quite known today because I have played Sorabji. He was a fabulous personality; he was another key figure in my life, very much so. Dr. Erik Chisholm (Dean in Cape Town, RS) was a close personal friend of Sorabji by the

way. Always there are these kinds of tapestries of interrelations, synchronicities. It is meaningful when you think of it."

Teaching

Since 1977 Yonty is involved in teaching. He was appointed at the Royal College of Music and later at Trinity College in London, and gradually his teaching position grew. He has always continued performing as well.

From the very first moment Yonty enjoyed teaching. He feels he learns from it: "I learned an enormous amount from teaching. Such different personalities, such different talents, different psychology that you have to develop. You cannot teach the same to everybody, every individual has got a different kind of life story and needs something individual and special. I want to acknowledge and further that quality. I want people to play as they are. If they take things from me that is great, but I don't want them to play like me, I have never been didactic in that sense. I like to work on various different levels, technical, musical, spiritual, but also on other creative things. I use hypnosis sometimes and I work a lot with Feldenkrais in mind. My approach is holistic. I have now had 29 years of learning, relating and having a good reciprocal rapport to students. It is a huge responsibility. You are there for them. You have to be a mentor, a guide, a friend. I don't think so much of them as students, more as friends. I am very close to my students. Most of them stay in touch from the early days. Also within the group of my students there are a number of key students, from whom you do learn a lot. Teaching is a voyage of discovery, building up a whole architecture of teaching and guiding, I have been very lucky with my students."

Yonty feels he teaches with a different view or direction to perhaps most other teachers: "I don't see myself as a pedagogue at all. I like going to the music on a human level. It has to be about life. When you play a phrase it has got to relate at some level to something experienced or remembered in life. The act of playing is such a personal enriching spiritual experience, the contact through the instrument, the vibrations, the hammers engaging the strings, the magic of pedalling is more important than relating to just the actual notes played on the piano. It is all about the living kaleidoscopic quality of sound. I think sound has got to relate to and mirror life, to all the emotions and feelings of life. I try to make my students aware of that by the language I use; I very often teach with kind of embedded stories. There is always something very special, ineffable, it is not just reproducing. I like catering these stories towards the person. It is almost like a psychological insight. I learned a great deal from the American hypnotherapist Milton Erickson's writings and audio-tapes."

The individuality of students is at the core for Yonty: "It is all about the student. You can teach with a kind of formula and traditional things, there are many teachers who are marvellous at it, but all of us have got to be creative, it never

stands still. I think in a way perhaps this is what I enjoy about it, because I hate teaching which is boringly conventional in ideas. As a teacher you have to have real imagination, you have to think over new ideas all the time. You have to have respect for the student and vice versa, that is really very important. You have to be mature and wise and find for everybody what they are searching for. I don't shout at my students. I don't believe in that. I would never want to intimidate them. The one or two times I really lost my temper in frustration I immediately regretted it. It is a kind of pointless luxury and selfish power. We can't afford to behave like this. I treat my students as friends, as equals. I think that is the only way to work with people, they have to trust you. I am not possessive about my students. I don't believe in that. I like them to feel that they have contributed a great deal to their own learning as well. I like involving the whole class when working with a number of students together. They should feel that they are contributing organically; I encourage them to ask questions. It is a great pleasure to work with 32 students on a high level. They are intelligent and they know instinctively whether it is valuable or not. One should never underestimate students. Teaching is a giving. You have got to give unstintingly. If they take it completely that is wonderful. After you have taught for a long demanding day, you look back and it is marvellous to feel what you have done and given. When my students play marvellously, I am extremely happy. Playing piano music is a precious organism. It has to grow; it always needs to go forward. I am aware of building all the time, I like reinventing things. A student can inspire you to do those many inspiring things. Genuinely gifted students bring up the best in me. I try to inspire them to do their very utmost in their music."

Teaching means a lot for Yonty's own performance: "I have learned a tremendous amount from teaching for my own playing. From the way one uses the instrument, the way one produces sound, one's use of the body, one's whole concept of style, communication, projection…the whole kind of gamut, the emotional spectrum, the absolute calm. I have learned a lot. I think my playing has changed enormously. You have to help people and you always have to give your best. I really love teaching. It gives me enormous pleasure when one of my students is successful and plays with something especially impressive and meaningful. Parallel to that, working and growing together it makes an entity. I think it is very important. It is a two-way circle; the two are interdependent. I could not teach without demonstrating at the piano."

Yonty feels a world has opened for him after starting to teach in 1977: "I hesitate to imagine how things would have gone, because I have never been ambitious. Does that sound strange?"

Artistic learning

Yonty cannot give a ready recipe for gaining an interpretative concept of a piece: "It depends on the piece itself. I like looking at a piece away from the piano first, so you get a mental kind of picture, an inner perception of the work. I like feeling a kind of relationship with a certain piece of music and to be able to hear it in my mind before creating it on the piano, because nothing is ever clear cut; there are always undercurrents and shadows. I like finding things a little different in the music by approaching it from a different aspect. The important thing in music is to see it from different perspectives, rather than just through your own, I like to see it change and develop. We learn the notes, we learn to play it and then eventually to bring in our own perception and sound. I am concerned with sound and touch. I worked today with my student for two hours on one page of a Beethoven sonata, just to get into the perfect and relevant sound. I like exploring things in the work which relate to myself, which relate to other things that I have learned. That is why I am very keen now to play music that I really love, I have spent so much time playing a lot of music, contemporary music particularly, which probably has not really meant that much to me."

Yonty also reads a lot and studies historic sources. He reads especially about piano playing, and he also writes regularly, amongst other things for the journal 'The Piano'. "I greatly enjoy writing programme notes, I think this stimulates the musical brain and it is a very important addition to just performing. One sees other things. I wrote a hefty chapter in a book on Schumann in Alan Walker's Schumann – A Symposium.[13] I also wrote a monograph on the 48 Preludes and Fugues of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. I like kind of going into the soul of the work from many different perspectives discovering different perspectives behind the notes. One should not be preoccupied with just reproducing. Some musicians just simply recreate what is in the score. But I like building different layers, for a complete personal perception and vision of the work. That attitude is a kind of key for me as well. I have always read books on piano playing, I am fascinated by that. I find it important that one knows about art, and about literature. One has to relate music to everything of life."

Perspectives in the profession for the students of today…

Yonty is very much aware of the fact that nowadays it is difficult to make a career in performing. He tries to help his students to get concerts. Some of his students are very enterprising. "Today they have got to go out into the world and they have got to be aware of technology and the internet. They have got to learn to find a niche for themselves. It is frankly not easy."

He talks with his students about their future. "I try to make them aware of the things they will encounter, varying from the importance of knowing how to adapt

to different acoustics to feeling good, confident about themselves and have a respectful self image."

Yonty finds that students are realistic about their career perspectives. "It is a very difficult career: anyone who chooses music always has that risk factor. Sometimes suddenly students start blossoming. But yes, the climate has changed. And now you have got to be hugely successful. There is an awesome competitive world outside. The level of piano playing at its best is very high."

… and his own relating to it

Yonty finds in general the way of playing today is different to earlier days. "My view of piano playing and teaching is probably from another generation, from an older generation. It is inevitable that some of the older pianists are for me far more important than today's. I am not interested in this very fast playing and I cannot bear percussive sound and forcing the piano. The one thing I very much concentrate on is pedalling, because I don't think many people are that concerned anymore about pedalling or even teach it. I think that it is one of the most functional components of piano playing and if one is not aware of it and does not know what one is doing so many wonderful aspects of interpretation and performance are untapped. You have to know how and why you are doing it. I also like to keep focussing on the range of colours and dynamics and develop your relationship to them. Funnily enough, I think the older I get, the better I have become as a teacher. Does that sound strange? I am a much better teacher than I was in 1977, I am sure. I do think that I now have such a resource over all these years of experience, it is like accumulating and enriching knowledge."

Yonty's study in psychology has been a great help to his own development, he finds. "I frequently read books on psychology. And I am profoundly interested in psychotherapy. You know, one gets through stages in one's life and I think I have perhaps now learned what is most important. I am interested in the question of how people express themselves, not just by the way they talk, but also by the way they move, breathe, their body language. And the question of how people relate professionally is important, how you relate to an audience. I had to learn these things. I read keenly about awareness. There are a lot of marvellously helpful inspiring writers. I reread favourite books. The more you know, the better you are able to teach. Teaching is not a comfortable business, I wish it was."

He never encountered physical problems through playing: "I had good tuition and I have always believed in the natural way of playing. I think if you tell students about tendonitis, they will get tendonitis. You are programming them. I like to free the body in playing. I am very aware of not locking the hands and not to use unnecessary force. You have to use the whole body. I am fascinated with the concept of using the instrument as a potential of oneself."

From now to the future

Yonty performs a lot, which is hard to combine with his teaching, because he has too little time to practise. "I work five days a week, long days. In the evenings I am too tired to practise. Fortunately when one teaches one is practising as well, absolutely. This year I have got quite a few good concerts, in Denmark and Greece. That was with orchestra, I love it, but I prefer solo recitals, it is something I relate to much better. I have the great affinity for that, because in a way one is one's own orchestra. I enjoy travelling. Recently with orchestras I played the second Rachmaninov concerto, Grieg and Mozart K 595 and K 466 and that has been great. But I think if you play with orchestra you need the luxury to be able to practise every single day. I can't and that really is awful. I will be doing all Beethoven cello sonatas and most of the Mozart sonatas for violin and piano very soon and although I have performed it before with another cellist, I am practising mentally a lot and I just kind of look at it every night and photo-read it once, twice a day. In the weekends I practise."

He has no special aims in mind for the future, except trying to find more time to practise and enjoy relaxation. "Music is totally central to me. I see everything as part of a whole and I love gardening and growing plants. One needs to have some freedom, it is good for that. I do not always have time for holidays. I hope we will go somewhere this year. I always want to teach better, I want to play better. I think eventually I would like to find a place in Italy or elsewhere. I am not sure; I love living in London. I find when I am not teaching I get bored at the prospect of doing nothing very easily. So it keeps me alive so to speak."

"The older I get, I am probably far more patient and understanding. I have much more confidence in myself when I perform. I used to be very nervous. I know now, when I am nervous it is because I am not prepared enough. To me now the music is more important than anything else. I love playing to an audience and communicating with an audience through the music. I can express myself much more crucially and freely now than I ever did before, and it seems to get better now I am much more comfortable. I think this is because I have experienced quite a lot in my life. Now I really feel that playing the piano has got to be about myself, about life. The music is everything. It absolutely helped me to overcome nerves. When you have a natural talent, you do not really value it enough. I did not take myself all that seriously, and I think that in a way that was not a good situation. But now I do. I hopefully just play the works I really want to play. Music is all about telling the truth, you cannot hide. Other people do it differently, and may do it better probably, but I think you have got to say what you feel is important. I think I have learned a lot as a human being. And in a way, don't you think that definitely and

profoundly influences how we play? I am not a performing animal in the sense that I want to impress with technique or an exhibition, like that. I want to get to the heart and essential meaning of the music. Myra used to say: 'searching for the truth'. And that I think, is the ultimate goal and ideal. Why composers have communicated their innermost feelings and thoughts, how you get to recreate it without getting in the way of the music, that is what it is about. In a way one is like a vessel, to express what is really there in great music, or being able to find something really worthwhile and good in not-such-amazing music. Very often you have to teach pieces you don't really like. But you have to put that behind you and approach it differently with sincerity.

For me music is expressing about life. And I think somehow you have to suffer. Sadly, sadly…You cannot be a great musician without knowing the heights and depths. It is a terrible price to pay. And unless you do I don't think you can play. You can do things with a certain elegance and a technical perfection, but… you are always telling a story, playing a phrase, as a singer, an instrumentalist, an orchestra, a choir, whatever it is. In the end when you play something you have to communicate. It is always very special and it is important not to play without thinking, without sort of reassessing what you are doing and how you are doing it. If I did my life over I would have practised more. But there is not much what I would change. I am happy, seriously. We all have suffered, any great whatever-you-are, musician, painter, you cannot go through life without learning. Everything you learn you pay a price for. So one learns that way, in a hard way.

I would love to have six months to practise new repertoire. Think out new ideas. That would be marvellous. I just wished I had more time. At the moment that is impossible. Mind you, I love working with other people, helping them. I think it is satisfactory for me, this kind of pleasure-giving as playing the piano. I think that if I would just be playing the piano it would be a very one dimensional life. Enjoyable, but I am not sure…"

Interview held February 9, 2006 in London

Yonty Solomon passed away on September 26, 2008 in London.

1 Dinu Lipatti (1917-1950), Rumanian pianist, famous for his Bach and Ravel interpretations.
2 From 'Miroirs' (1904 -05), composed by Maurice Ravel (1875 – 1937).
3 Wanda Landowska (1879-1957), Polish keyboard player, leading figure in the 20th century revival of the harpsichord.
4 The Well-Tempered Keyboard; 48 preludes and fugues in all keys.
5 Alfred Cortot (1877-1962), French pianist and piano pedagogue.
6 Walter Gieseking (1895-1956), German pianist.
7 Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli (1920-1995), Italian pianist.
8 By Maurice Ravel.
9 Both institutions are in London.
10 Moshe Feldenkrais (1904-1984), Israeli physicist, who developed a method for 'body awareness through movement' and 'functional integration'. Feldenkrais wrote *Body and Mature Behaviour* in 1947.
11 The composer Sorabji (1892–1988) lived very isolated and was a legend. Through Yonty Solomon's performances several of Sorabji's works became known.
12 Michael Habermann being the other one.
13 The essay 'The Sonatas and Fantasies' in *Robert Schumann: the Man and his Music* (London, 1973).

Willy Krol

The young bugle player and conductor Willy Krol was born in 1983 in the Dutch province of Frisia as a daughter in a family of teachers. She went to grammar school in Leeuwarden and graduated from the North Netherlands Conservatoire (currently Prince Claus Conservatoire) in 2005 in two principal studies: Bugle and Wind Band Conducting. Currently Willy is active in a real portfolio career, playing in two wind orchestras, teaching brass instruments to young children, conducting an orchestra and publishing. She lives in Bolsward, Frisia.

I think that at present I am realising the image of the future I had when I went to the conservatoire, and I want to continue doing so.

Early childhood

Willy Krol was born in Franeker in the province of Frisia, the Netherlands on April 17, 1983. Her parents are both primary school teachers, but Willy's mother stopped working after Willy and her two and a half years younger sister were born. Willy's parents met when they were both teaching in a small primary school in Dongjum, near Franeker. As a small child Willy was also in her father's class in Dongjum. When Willy was six years old the family moved to the village of Menaldum, where her father originally came from, and where many family members, including her grandparents, lived. Willy's father remained in the school in Dongjum, but Willy and her little sister went to primary school in their new village. Currently Willy's father teaches in a very small primary school in the little village of Westhoek, with a total of 23 pupils in all eight groups.[1]

Music in childhood; the wind band at the core

Music was important in the family; Willy's father played the piano and teaches the recorder in primary school and he also taught his daughter to play the recorder from the age of six years on. Some of the family members on her father's side played in wind bands, a very popular kind of band in many Frisian villages and cities. Her parents thought that Willy should start playing the piano, but her mother found that too lonely an occupation for the girl.

When the local wind band *Constantia*[2] came to perform in Willy's primary school in Menaldum, Willy was all excited, and it was decided that she would play in the band. "Menaldum has three wind orchestras, a brass band, a drum fanfare and a normal fanfare orchestra. The first two are Christian and the last one is a non Christian one." Willy was eight years old by then. Her instrument became the bugle; first Willy wanted a cornet, which instrument she knew because a girl who

lived in the same street played the cornet, but as a fanfare did not have any cornets, it became the instrument closest to it in sound.

For two years she had bugle lessons, through the local music school, both private and in a small ensemble. Her teacher was Jappie Kuipers, whom she met again when she was at the conservatoire, now in a mentoring role. After two years, when Willy was ten years old, she was considered advanced enough to join the band.

Playing in a wind band was something which appealed to Willy: "Making music together, sharing your hobby, coming together to share your joy in playing together." Remarkable is that Willy, who is a professional musician now, still plays in the same wind band. "I have a lot of friends there; the band is good and as long as I don't get a very special offer to conduct an orchestra on Friday evenings I will remain there." Just a few weeks ago Willy's twelve and a half years membership was celebrated in the wind band.

"I loved it, I was very motivated. I remember the first time I came there with my little case with the bugle in it. 'Hey, there is the new one', I heard people whisper around me. Then my place was indicated to me. They started with a march and I couldn't follow it at all. Not that it was so difficult, but I suddenly heard the voices (instrumental lines, RS) coming from everywhere. But for me this was an extra motivation to practise hard at home, so that I would know next time. Things developed slowly; first I was the third bugle at the back. Then someone stopped and I moved one chair forwards. Actually, I went from third bugle to first bugle, skipping the second because they considered me suitable to sit in front."

Every week there were rehearsals, sometimes preceded by group rehearsals and there were a number of regular performances, like the New Year's concert with a sister orchestra and a benefactor's concert in a home for the elderly. Every year the orchestra took part in a competition; in the summer it would play during the fives match.[3] Furthermore the members of the orchestra would collect old newspapers once a month, march in the streets on the occasion of national festive days and so on. Willy's sister also joined the orchestra at some point, and today still plays the soprano saxophone. All this made that throughout Willy's childhood music played a central role. The conductor of the orchestra since eleven years, Durk Krol, would turn out to be an inspiring example for Willy over the years.

Period at grammar school and choice for the music profession

After primary school Willy wanted to go to grammar school[4], and she did. In 1995 Willy entered grammar school in Leeuwarden, and enjoyed it, although she had to work very hard for it. "The first three years were busy, but okay. The last three years I had to work really, really hard. It meant that I never went out. I studied all the time. I did not have time for sports and the last two years I did not go to school on my bike anymore, but by bus, in order to have a bit of rest. Nevertheless I would

not have wanted to miss it. It was a good school, the teachers were nice, I had a lot of friends there and I was very interested in subjects like Latin and Greek."

Meanwhile she went on with her music lessons and with playing in the fanfare orchestra. After four years of lessons with Jappie Kuipers, Willy got bugle lessons from the conductor of the band, Durk Krol. A difficult period in playing came for Willy when she had to have her teeth adjusted, by wearing a fixed brace for two years. It was very demotivating for her to come to her lessons with her instrument not sounding good because she could hardly control her embouchure. There was even a time during this period, when she considered stopping altogether. But once the brace came off, things changed and went well again, and Willy's motivation returned.

In the third class of grammar school Willy received her C diploma.[5] From that moment on her development continued to go well. "I continued to grow on that first row with bugles, which made me play better, because they played well. I got the opportunity to play solo once in a while, which was also helpful. I played from time to time in a bigger orchestra, and this is how things went."

When Willy was in the fourth class of grammar school she had to make up her mind about the subjects she wanted to choose, which made her think of her future choices for a profession as well. "I decided that music was the thing I wanted to do most of all. It was especially Durk Krol whom I found stimulating. His enthusiasm in front of the orchestra and also during the lessons, the way he kept stimulating me was contagious. I realised that, anyway, I wanted to go into music after grammar school, considering that I could always do something else after that. I then sought contact with the North Netherlands Conservatoire and they drew my attention to a conducting course they intended to start in Heerenveen, both for amateur conductors and as an introductory course for the conservatoire. It did not cost me much time to decide that I wanted to take that course."

Between 1999 and 2001 every Monday evening Willy took the course, combining it with the two last years in grammar school. It was quite a strain, but she found it worthwhile. "I had theory lessons and conducting lessons with Alex Schillings. It was a totally intergenerational class, with big age differences, but I actually liked that. We were all there with the same aim, learning to conduct and having more knowledge about music." Willy liked the fact that now she was actually conducting an orchestra for the first time in her life. Soon she was asked to take over the small youth band of the Menaldum Fanfare Orchestra.

Meanwhile Willy also had to fight a small battle in the North Netherlands Conservatoire because she intended to enter the school for two principal studies, conducting and bugle. She was advised to change the bugle for the trumpet, because it would give her more opportunities in the performing labour market, as there is only one professional (fanfare) orchestra in the Netherlands with bugles. But Willy stood her ground and got things her way.

"I love the sound of the bugle, I didn't want to change it for anything else. And I knew my future aim, here again Durk Krol was my living example. He taught music in the primary school in Menaldum, he conducted the small children's orchestra and the big orchestra. In addition he taught all brass instruments. It seemed wonderful to me to build things up like that, making children enthusiastic while they are in primary school, teaching them well, having them enter a youth orchestra, and once you know that they are up to it, have them in your big orchestra, further shaping them because you know all their strong and weak points. That was what I wanted."

Willy's motivation for the profession was also grounded in her love for working with people, adults and especially children, no doubt also through the example of both her parents who were primary school teachers. "I considered becoming a teacher in primary school as well, but somehow what had happened to my father scared me; he had been kicked out of the school in Dongjum very suddenly. This was just before the summer holidays started. After 25 years of dedicated work my father was told that in two weeks' time he would not have a job in the school anymore; he had to go and replace someone in another school."

At grammar school teachers were surprised that Willy wanted to go to the conservatoire. "It was so normal that you would go to university after grammar school, I really had to resist these views of the teachers. Why would grammar school have been a 'waste' once you go to the conservatoire? I just wanted to have a broad education." But Willy's parents were supportive, and let their daughter choose her own path.

At this time Willy also took another decision, which was to lose weight. She had always been slightly overweight and the last few years of hard work and a life mainly consisting of sitting had made her gain even more weight. Within less than a year she lost 25 kilos, by eating healthy and, after her final examination for grammar school, taking up exercise and sports again.

Just before her final examination from grammar school Willy's grandfather died. Willy feels that her grandparents, who lived in Menaldum as well, were, together with her parents, very influential for her. "I spent a lot of time at my grandparents'; my grandfather liked to help me study. I would stay there sometimes for three days to work quietly. They took good care of me; they were very stimulating."

An intensive and rewarding time at the conservatoire

In June 2001 Willy received her diploma from grammar school and did an entrance examination for the North Netherlands Conservatoire, where she was admitted. In the summer holiday she met her boyfriend Neno de Boer, when she was looking for a trombone player to strengthen the orchestra, while taking part in the World Music Competition in Kerkrade.[6]

Willy continued to live in her parental home in Menaldum during the first year of her studies in Groningen and after that year she went to live with her boyfriend in Bolsward. Neno works as a mechanical engineer and is an enthusiastic amateur musician.

"Once I was in the conservatoire I felt what a blessing it was that I could focus only on music. At grammar school life was so busy, that my music was the first thing to be dropped when I had to choose. I think that if I would have had more time in those last few years at grammar school I could have grown more, both in my conducting course as well as mentally."

At the conservatoire immediately it was all about practice instead of theory, Willy found it quite a change. The daily journey from Groningen to Menaldum was long, and once she went to live in Bolsward she would travel a total of four hours a day, which was even more demanding. Nevertheless Willy felt very positive about all her choices.

Willy liked the subject of *contextual studies*, which integrated harmony, counterpoint, performance practice and music history. She liked to be challenged, for example by having to find out the riddles of dodecaphonic music. She also became quite handy in ICT, more by finding out about it herself, than by the lessons she received at the conservatoire.

Willy was quite happy with her principal study teachers, Auke van der Merk for bugle and Tijmen Botma for conducting. She also got piano practice in score reading, which she regards as very essential: "I liked to practise it, it is so important not to hesitate once you are working with an orchestra. If a French horn player asks you what a certain note is, you have to be able to transpose[7] really easily."

In general Willy feels that her conservatoire studies reflected the practice, which was her future in the profession, quite well, although there were a few things she missed: "In the first two years I did not have an ensemble, and I really missed that. There are of course not many pieces with bugle, but there were no projects either where I could take part in, except for singing in the choir."

Another thing was that during the first year of the conducting course there were no possibilities for practise with a real band or orchestra. "You came to your lesson, you conducted in front of a mirror, and you went home, and again practised in front of the mirror. You had no way of knowing how musicians would react to your conducting."

Fortunately Willy had some practice with the youth group she led, part of the Menaldum Fanfare Orchestra, and in 2002, when she went to her second year, she was appointed conductor of the wind band *Excelsior* in Parrega, a band she is still conducting today.

A lot of attention was paid during the lessons to the social aspect of leading amateur orchestras. How do you deal, for example, with a fifty year old man who has been playing in the orchestra his whole life and feels that he should play the

solos, when there is a younger musician who would do it much better? How to stand your ground and still remain inspiring? Willy liked to think such things over and discuss it with her teachers and the other students.

Highlights in the study were the yearly conducting projects with different themes, guest conductors and professional orchestras. "It was highly demanding, you had to know a lot of scores. When there is a professional orchestra sitting there, which you are going to lead, you simply have to be there. Those weeks were very energizing for me. There were many wonderful guest teachers and conductors who really could help you grow, by only making a few remarks. I often realised, when I saw someone such as David King or Norbert Nozy at work, that actually I knew nothing, and then it would really excite me to realise that there is so much to learn; and that increased my motivation enormously."

Willy's teachers

The teacher who was the greatest influence for Willy was the conductor of her orchestra, Durk Krol. "He would *see* you, as a person, and show his appreciation for what you did. Not just take everything for granted. I have always been very positive about him as a conductor as well; he was good with people and inspiring during the rehearsals. It was a joy to go to his rehearsals. He made you feel that you have to do it together, that it is a shared responsibility. During the period I had a bad time because of my brace, he pulled me through. He looked for music I could play, and also adapted music. If he hadn't been my teacher I might have stopped. He really saw people; he found music for the orchestra which appealed to a seventy year old bass player as well as to a fourteen year old girl who just entered the orchestra." Willy regards him as a real role model.

Her conducting teacher at the conservatoire, Tijmen Botma, was not the teacher she thought she would have. Botma taught together with Alex Schillings, whom Willy had had as teacher in the preparatory course. But soon she was quite happy with Tijmen: "Alex was more a kind of *maestro*. If he would have a different opinion than you, he would say 'no, you're wrong', whereas Tijmen would encourage you to explain yourself and he might say that he hadn't looked at it from that angle."

Willy finds that Tijmen taught her well over the four years at the conservatoire. "I think that he guided me from being a giggly eighteen year old girl into a mature professional musician. He coached me well during my internships in the orchestras. First he would leave me in peace, so that I could get accustomed to the orchestra. Then at some point he would say to me: 'you are doing it this way, do you think there might be another way as well?' He was always so quiet and positive, which is really important, because you *do* feel vulnerable standing in front of an orchestra consisting of fifty people where the majority is much older than you. Tijmen would record it on video, so that I could have a look again at home, which was very helpful."

Auke van der Merk was Willy's bugle teacher. "I remember when I played for him for the first time he warned me that he was very severe. Well, I never noticed that. He was good, supportive and fair. I think as a teacher you should make demands on your students. They are in higher education, studying to be professionals!" Auke was motivating for her, and Willy feels that there was a good balance between what he taught her and the possibilities for her own input. "I always went to the lessons with joy. And when there was criticism from Auke it would always be constructive, so that you knew what you could do with it; you never felt pushed in the ground. I also think he had a great influence on the development of my musicality."

During Willy's period at the conservatoire Auke got an assistant, called Hessel Buma, who also taught Willy occasionally. At first she felt he was quite inexperienced, but when she had severe embouchure problems just after the summer, between her third and fourth year, she changed her opinion, because Hessel helped her in a very good way to solve her problems.

"I think that I got into trouble with my embouchure because of overreaching myself. Since I started playing when I was eight, I played every day, never taking any rest during summer holidays. I got in a downward spiral, losing my self-confidence. I overcame this by building it up again slowly, by talking with Auke to gain self-confidence and doing good exercises. Both Auke and Hessel really helped me."

Willy regards it as an incident: "The more you learn, for example in the methodology lessons, the more you watch what you are doing. I sometimes felt something in my lips and then I was afraid I couldn't play anymore. But that passed. Now I know that it is quite natural that things go well sometimes and less well other times."

Career development

Willy graduated in 2005 for both principal studies and after that easily developed her work. Currently, seven months after graduation, she still has her orchestra in Parrega, she teaches and she conducts the youth group of the brass band *Pro Rege* in Heerenveen, and she also plays in her 'old' orchestra *Constantia* in Menaldum and in the Gelders fanfare orchestra in Epe, an orchestra conducted by Tijmen Botma, where she is first and solo bugle player.

Willy likes it, because she learns a lot about bugle playing there and it is interesting for her to see Tijmen work with an orchestra, how he conducts certain passages and how he rehearses technically. Willy's partner Neno also plays in the orchestra, they go there together once a fortnight.

The group 'Pro Rege' consists of nine children between the ages of eight and eleven; eight playing the cornet and one the althorn. "I give them group instruction with a lot of ensemble playing and working on basic techniques." Willy likes working with children.

Two and a half days a week, Willy has a job at a music publishing company, De Haske, where she works on product development. She likes the work, which brings her into contact with a lot of publishing houses in the Netherlands and abroad. A job as a performer is not easy to gain; the only professional orchestra in the Netherlands that engages bugle players is the orchestra of the land forces, where currently there are no positions. Willy takes it as it is.

And last but not least, Willy's entrepreneurial skills show in her own little company, named *Wicro Music*, which she founded in order to work on assignments from publishing houses, namely music engraving of different scores and parts. "I find it important to do different things; I am not someone who conducts five orchestras. I think my enthusiasm would diminish if I would have to go out every evening to a different orchestra. The same goes for teaching. I couldn't teach the same songs to children four days a week."

Learning as a musician

Willy feels that within her profession nearly everything is developed through practice. "You train your ears through exercise and experience, not by using a book. The same goes for conducting." Willy is a learner by doing. She knows what needs to be there in order to have interaction. "It is really something else to make a gesture in front of a mirror or in front of an orchestra. Good listening and rehearsal skills are critical. And you have to know the score inside out."

Willy describes the steps she takes when preparing a score to rehearse and perform with an orchestra and developing an artistic view of the piece as: "First I study the score, the melodic lines, and the chords. I can do that behind the piano, but also through inner hearing, sitting behind my desk. The first thing I do is determine the structure. I think it was Tijmen who used to make the comparison with a helicopter in the air: first you try to get an overview of the whole piece and then you fly lower and lower, so that you perceive the details. I read the preface of the score, I read about the music and about the composer. I determine the meaning of the title. Then I go through the score, looking for particular forms, the different tempi, returning fragments and those kinds of things. Then I might look at the instrument groups, who plays something important where, and which instruments are combined and how. Then I look at the chords: which role does a certain instrument have in that particular chord, how does this relate to intonation? Where are the tension and the relaxation in the music? That is the way I prepare myself. On principle I don't leave anything to chance. I think that as a conductor you should know the score very well beforehand. I already have the artistic view in my mind when I go to the orchestra. But of course I can adjust it when I hear it in reality, but it won't be very much adjusted, I think."

Willy also reads to keep up with her professional development, books about musical styles, but also journals about didactics and about wind bands.

Social learning is critical in Willy's profession: "First thing is to keep your ears wide open. Listen to people and talk to them. I find it important to be on the same page as the administration of the orchestra, so the last meeting of the year I will be there to talk things through. Having chats in the intervals of the rehearsals with band members and with newcomers is also important. I find it important that people feel at ease and confident. I am open to criticism, but I want other people to be open as well and not talk behind each other's backs. I don't care that I am younger than the average member; I stick to those things."

While teaching Willy discovered that her pupils learn in many different ways. "I myself have to reason things out before I can understand them and bring them into practice. There are also pupils who learn very intuitively and aurally. I discovered that there are different ways of acquiring information and processing it. Working with young children means that you have to leave a lot of space for the things they want to do themselves. You must not say: 'This is the way it should be done, because…', but 'this is the way it can be done, but why…?' Children have to learn to think independently. In your enthusiasm you can tell them a lot of things, but it is better to ask questions. And it is also important to keep space for a little joke. Perhaps that is even more important than getting through the whole programme."

The role of music and future aims

"Everything I do has to do with music, it is my work and it is my hobby. I go to concerts, I listen to music." In addition to that Willy likes sports, it is important for her to stay fit.

In the future she would like an additional orchestra to conduct, preferably a fanfare orchestra. "I would like an orchestra on a higher level. I also would like to teach more." At the moment Willy's work week is very diverse. But if an opportunity in a music school should present itself, she would take that and work less in the publishing house. She is in no hurry though, and sensibly taking her steps, intending to move only when something is an improvement, mainly in terms of artistic level.

"I went to the conservatoire to conduct. And I took bugle as second principal study because I wanted to teach as well. That was my aim. Sometimes I think that I would love to play the bugle professionally. So if there would be a possibility to join a professional fanfare orchestra I would certainly do it. But chances are few and I don't really mind because I love to conduct and teach, especially to conduct. So I will continue to do that. I don't think I'll continue throughout my life with music engraving**,** because in the end that is not interesting enough. Things will come, but I am critical. I don't want to have to travel too much and too far, for example."

"If I would be classified as a musician, I would say that in the first place I am a conductor. Someone who likes guiding people in their hobby, and stimulating them in a positive way. To make sure that they enjoy what they are doing, but also see to it that there is progress. In the second place I am a teacher. I like to teach children and make them enthusiastic about continuing to make music. See to it that they take it seriously and practise at home as well, and stimulate their parents to help them. And in the third place I am a performing musician, mainly with amateur orchestras, happily making music and happy to make a wonderful concert with each other. Never against each other, but always together and give each other something. I am happy in what I am doing. I really think that I went to the conservatoire with ideals which, right now, I am trying to make come true. Like building up an association that encompasses different levels of orchestras, that is certainly my ambition for the future. I think that the key to all this is to do it in a very integrated way. It is important to acquire new orchestra members, so I would like to show in schools and music schools what an orchestra actually is, and trying to get rid of images that an orchestra walks in the streets in wooden shoes playing marches. I think that at present I am realising the image of the future I had when I went to the conservatoire, and I want to continue doing so."

Interview held March 29, 2006 in Groningen

1 In the Netherlands primary school starts at the age of four and ends at the age of twelve. In total primary school consists of eight 'groups'; group 1 and 2 containing 4 and 5 year-olds. From group 3 on official education in reading and figuring starts.
2 This was a so called 'fanfare' orchestra, consisting of brass instruments, saxophones and percussion.
3 A typical Frisian sport.
4 Higher general secondary school.
5 Grade C. In this system pupils work for diploma's A, B, C and D, consisting of both theory and performance.
6 A famous competition for amateur wind bands that takes place every year.
7 Changing keys.

Gijs van Rhijn

Gijs van Rhijn, born in 1983, studied classroom music teacher training at the North Netherlands Conservatoire in Groningen, where he graduated in 2004. During his studies he started to work as a teacher at an anthroposophy-based secondary school, as well as work with toddlers at the community music school, both in Groningen. In 2005 Gijs started his studies at the Cabaret Academy in Amsterdam. His goal is to make theatre programmes with a pivotal role for music.

I thought that I was only thinking about doing, but of course that is thinking as well.

Gijs van Rhijn is a dedicated classroom music teacher and cabaret artist and currently 22 years old. He was born in 1983 in the village of Noordbroek in the eastern part of the province of Groningen, as the oldest child of a family of three children. One year after him came his brother Joep, who is currently studying jazz trumpet and three years later his sister Sofie, who studies Biology. Gijs' father is a biologist and his mother works as an activities coach in an institution for mentally handicapped people.

Gijs' mother used to play the saxophone and took the three children to the local wind band, in which they all played. Gijs chose the clarinet, his brother Joep the trumpet. Both boys chose in the end to go to the conservatoire and aim for a future in the music profession.

Childhood and years growing up during adolescence

Playing with the family in the local wind band was central in music-making, like in many villages in the north of the Netherlands. "We used to say 'we're going to *The Harmony*', but I believe that it was called officially *Music Association Oosterbroek*." Gijs started playing the clarinet at the age of eight, starting immediately in the band and meanwhile he got lessons in the community music school of Menterwolde. The music school did not have its own building so the lessons took place in the village house. "I especially liked the *chic* uniform which I got, and I liked marching together in a row, always going wrong, but being great fun!"

Gijs went to a Jenaplan primary school[1] in Hoogezand. He went there from 1987 till 1995. At primary school music was not really a hot topic: "There was a bit of singing, but it was not so structured and it generated a lot of noise, which the teacher did not like. So it was not much fun. Besides I did not know how to use my voice. In the class children were not very occupied with music."

Just before Gijs started to play the clarinet he had had three months of piano lessons, which were not a success. "I must have been seven years old. I got these

piano lessons at someone's house. I used to go there to do 'my thing', after that I went home and had to practise, then go there again; I did not like it at all, for me music was not something you just do for yourself." Later on Gijs would rediscover the piano, once he found out that he could also be an accompanist.

The choice for the clarinet was interesting: as a little boy Gijs heard a concert given by a symphony orchestra and decided that he wanted to play the violin. But as in the village there was only tuition in music through partaking in the wind band, Gijs chose the clarinet: "Perhaps this has evolved into a romantic story, because mostly you just get the instrument they happen to have or need. But of course the clarinet is some sort of woodwind equivalent of the violin. I only remember that I found my clarinet very beautiful; I kept getting my instrument from its case to clean it and so on, I was so proud!"

First Gijs played in the youth group of the wind band, consisting of 15 members, and later on, at the age of eleven, he went on to play in the big wind band, which consisted of some 70 players. He kept going to both groups for quite a while, because the youth group also needed some youngsters who were ahead of the newcomers.

In 1995 Gijs went to the Winkler Prins College in Veendam, where he would obtain his HAVO[2] diploma in 2000. In the end Gijs feels he had a good time at secondary school. The first three years were quite tough though, because Gijs appeared to be quite behind in figures and language. "There was a lot I did not know, my primary school was basically aimed at social development and less at cognitive development."

Gijs worked hard. It turned out that he also had to cope with a light form of dyslexia, which he dealt with well.

Music was something he liked tremendously, not only because he liked his music lessons at school, but especially because of the talent scouting presentations the school developed. Gijs liked to take part and was successful. "I started taking part from the very beginning at secondary school, and I won prizes, so that really felt good; I had the feeling that I was doing something very well, I was also given that feeling."

This made Gijs consider going to the conservatoire to study the clarinet. He then talked to a girl who was a former pupil of his secondary school and who had switched at the conservatoire from clarinet as principal study to classroom music teacher training. "She said to me: 'that is really something for you', explaining that my study would be much broader and that I would not become bored having to play my clarinet for the whole day. I then went to the North Netherlands Conservatoire to have a look and I decided to go along with it. 'This is really it', I thought. I liked especially the atmosphere, students getting along well and this feeling of amiability."

Another view that Gijs held was the fact that he realised that you have to be a very good player in order to gain an income as a clarinettist, whereas there would be possibilities to work as a music teacher in secondary schools. Gijs considered himself as someone who would really be able to cope with a class, and he liked the idea of working with groups. "I am really a group person. I want to do something with people, because that gives me energy. I must keep moving. And I have to be able to do my own thing in a group; in the band I started to feel bored in the end. I want to use my own creativity and not people saying to me 'do this' or 'do that'. I want communication between people and play my role in that." Gijs' parents were positive about his choice for his music study. "They were very proud when I was admitted to the conservatoire."

Motivation for the choice of classroom music teaching

"I fantasised a lot. So during the time that I made this choice, I fantasised about having a goat in the classroom. I would put the goat in the corner, and during the whole day the goat would pass around examination documents. I don't know why that seemed so much fun to me, but it did. I would be in this classroom with a very chic little suitcase full of pens, which I would distribute. Yes, I had quite romantic ideas, also about being a teacher."

Gijs reflected a lot about working with children. Before choosing to be a classroom music teacher he had also considered teaching in a primary school as a general classroom teacher. But once he had made the choice for a music study his preference shifted to older age groups, to pupils of secondary schools. "The idea of working with youngsters till 18 years old appealed to me, it felt a real challenge. I also had these ideas of creating this big social circle in which I have a place and a function. Right now I happen to be a music teacher, but that is not special in this context. The thing is that my work enables me to have a lot of contact with various people, music being the medium for that."

Period of training at the conservatoire

Gijs was excited that he was admitted in June 2000 and enjoyed his time at the conservatoire, which started in September of that year. He had not taken any pre-college training at the conservatoire (e.g. in the junior school), because tuition in music theory had been provided through the wind band.

Gijs had to adjust and get used to the tuition in the conservatoire. "In the beginning I needed a lot of confirmation, someone telling me that things go well, so that I could move on. Or tell me that things don't go well, so that I could do something about it. I noticed that things were very different from secondary school, teachers giving me a feeling of 'just try, don't ask'. I wanted to be supported and guided, but on the other hand I wanted to be independent. So in the beginning I found it hard, but later I experienced it as positive."

In general things that were based on 'learning by doing', like clarinet playing, went well. 'Thinking subjects' like Gijs calls it, went less well, like the *contextual studies*[3]; he had to work very hard on that. "But later on I found out that actually I learned a lot." Gijs realises that in the beginning he asked a lot of questions in order to continuously feel confirmed. "Later on things went better, and I learned better, because I asked the right questions, and because I needed less confirmation. I gained self-confidence. Just this feeling of 'I know what I am doing, if you don't agree with it, fine, then I will improve it. But it does not touch my self-confidence.'"

Pedagogy did not feel as a realistic subject to Gijs. "I had the feeling it did not connect to reality at all. I did an internship, and noticed that I did things totally different from the way I was taught, and that this worked. Then I was so cocky to think 'so this is it, proof taken'. Later on of course, I found out that you are not meant to take the pedagogy literally, but that it offers handles which you can use. I liked most the practical work. I liked to talk about pedagogy, but having lessons in pedagogy was not much fun for me."

It were mainly the pedagogical 'tricks' that appealed to Gijs. He realises now that while he thought he was not a 'thinker' during his study, he reflected a lot. "I thought that I was only thinking about doing, but of course that is thinking as well."

Looking back to his studies Gijs finds that there were things he wondered about why they were needed, and why they had to be done. "But apparently I needed them to become who I am now." As an example he mentions the *orientation apprenticeship* which started some eight weeks after the beginning of his study. "You get a look from different angles in your future workplace, and sometimes you are allowed to do a little something. It takes places at a secondary school, a primary school and a vocational training institution. You are meant to observe and do some lesson-supporting stuff, and sometimes something really for yourself, with the class. I thought, 'Come on, I want to give a lesson, what is the purpose of doing this limited tiny little bit?' I taught the children a song and thought that by only doing that I would not learn anything myself. Looking back, I think that of course I could not have done that yet; it might have become chaos, at least there would have been huge holes in the lesson. By then I would not have seen these holes yet."

Gijs enjoys reflecting back with a more pedagogical eye. "In my current institution[4] I got an assignment at the beginning of the school year. We were told to make a show, and we were promised a hall and an audience of fellow students after a period of six weeks. We were swimming, we had no clue; the assignment was so open! So we were very critical and told each other that this was a ridiculous assignment. Now we just finished it, and afterwards all students in the audience talked to us about how they liked it, how much fun it was, what they thought about different things, and I realised that this is what it is about, this is the goal. Our teachers just wanted us to develop something and get us talking about it with our

fellow students. It makes you get into real contact with people of the school. I had not considered that."

Learning from each other was very critical during the period that Gijs spent at the conservatoire over the classroom music teacher training. He experienced the environment as a real learning environment, he felt safe, although not always at ease because of his enormous thrive for perfectionism.

Gijs had a good relationship with his clarinet teacher at the conservatoire, Reinier Hogerheijde. "He is very direct, knows how to phrase what is not good. So halfway through my study, I discovered that every positive thing he said really had value and a meaning. So I felt good when he was positive." Hogerheijde had a positive influence on Gijs' motivation, although Gijs would not call him a role model: "Sometimes I found him too tough in a social sense."

Gijs realises that he felt quite dependent on the judgement of others, especially teachers. His feelings towards his teachers are mixed. Some of the teachers were pleased with what he was doing, others were not too happy as soon as Gijs did things that fell outside the assignments. "I felt that kind of resistance, and it would only make me more persistent."

Gijs mentions the example of once having to carry out an interdisciplinary project. "It was a project of drama, fine arts and music. With a group of students we had to give shape to a film, meant for a CKV 1[5] project, but the assignment was extremely vague. So we just started somewhere and at some point we thought that we were having a very good idea. All of a sudden it went well, like a train. Then we discussed our concept with the head of department, and he had all kinds of objections and actually rejected our whole idea. We were stunned, because with this big group we had come so far in consensus by listening to each other and compromising. So we had to start anew. We did not want his guidance anymore nor the coaching we got from someone in the drama department because it kept confusing us. Finally we made a product in one week. Actually we made a very good film, which even from then on was used as promotion material, whereas from the very start on we had been told that it looked like nothing."

This story makes Gijs convinced that during studies there must be space to 'fail'. In his new school Gijs realises that that is part of the game. At the conservatoire the idea of things going wrong on the stage was not an option. "The more you tried to prevent things going wrong on the stage, or at least going less ideal, the bigger the chance that it would actually happen. At the conservatoire things were made really heavy and everybody was totally nervous. 'I have to say something on the stage in a few minutes time, and that has to be very special'. There you are and you have to do it in three minutes. Then it goes wrong and you are falling on your face. Now at the Academy for Cabaret, everything I do happens on the stage. So that gives you the possibility to find it fun at some point. The audience enjoys you, also when things go wrong. There is no feeling of threat on the stage. At the conservatoire it was so

heavy when I had to play my clarinet. And worst of all was the feeling that it was basically only okay if, stepping off the stage after playing, you murmured "well, that could have been better, I think." Gijs finds that the stage must be the workplace, a place to feel good and enjoy yourself.

Combining study and work

During his study Gijs started to work. Amongst other things he worked with mentally handicapped children, and started to work with parents and toddlers at the community music school of Groningen, the course being called 'Music on your lap'.

Gijs liked the time he spent with the mentally handicapped children, giving them piano lessons and forming a little choir, where they sang Dutch hits, 'Frans Bauer and that kind of stuff'. One of Gijs' pupils turned out to be deaf, "I only found out after half a year. He lip-read so well that he understood what I said. I gave him piano lessons by using colours. I gave the notes colours and adjusted the colours to the keyboard, so that he could press the colours. I taught him the rhythms if they did not go well enough, and then he used to perform them well. But one day I came into the room and the radio played loudly. He played with the radio on, and then it turned out that he did not hear anything."

The 'Music on your lap' course Gijs still does. The group consists of eight toddlers from the age of one and a half till four, together with a parent, and the idea is deepening the relationship between child and parent and the well-being of the child through music. He developed the course himself, on request from the community music school. Tuition about this young age group is not provided at the music teacher training course at the conservatoire, so a lot emerged by trying out.

Gijs also started working at an anthroposophy-based secondary school. He still does that. He liked combining his study and work, although there were pitfalls: "I started to conduct a choir from my first year on, which went fine. But when you try to bring children in a secondary school classroom to singing, that is another thing. A choir is willing, and so are mentally handicapped children, toddlers of course are not a problem either. But as a teacher at secondary school, I really felt that I needed pedagogy, in order to give shape to longer term thinking."

Gijs found the start at the secondary school not easy. "I had this image of how I wanted to take it on, and I started that way. But things developed differently. I realised that partly it had to do with the fact that I had not finished my studies yet. It was difficult, but I enjoyed it. I did not find the coaching from the side of the conservatoire very good, but I was determined to show them what I was up to. I realised that everybody starts these things by stumbling. Learning by doing suits me. At a certain moment the head of department at the conservatoire advised me to stop my job at this school. I could not believe his advice, why wouldn't he help me instead? But I thought 'stopping is not in my nature at all'. I was not going to quit

with the unsatisfying feeling that people will think that I did a bad job. I thought 'I will show them something!' and I found out that that was the best way. I said to a class at some moment 'I don't know what is exactly happening, but I don't get you where I want you. We need to talk.' And I don't know how, but somehow that succeeded. Now I also found out that it has to do with my body language. Through the cabaret I become very aware of that." All in all, Gijs considers it as an advantage that he started work while still studying. He gained a lot of experience.

Looking back, he thinks that it would have been better if the school had taken the learning by doing on the job more seriously, now he had to find out a lot for himself, without any guidance.

After graduation: continuing the career and going to the Academy of Cabaret

Gijs graduated in 2004 at the North Netherlands Conservatoire and then took an entrance examination for the Academy for Cabaret. He was not admitted. That was a big blow for him, although on the other hand he realises that he also has to learn to digest those kinds of things happening in life. One year later, in 2005, he was admitted to a private Academy for Cabaret in Amsterdam. Since September 2005 he is studying there and travels up and down from Groningen to Amsterdam.

His incentives for this choice go back quite a while. Before his period at the conservatoire he used to work at camping places as an entertainer during the summer holidays, for adults as well as for children. He liked that tremendously and learned to improvise on the spot. "You can entertain people with nothing, it was fantastic to do."

Meanwhile Gijs continues his work at the music school and at the secondary school. Currently he feels confident in his job at the secondary school. He works a lot in a practical way, being aware that you cannot ask 12 to 15 or 16 year olds to listen all the time. He sings and performs often with the pupils and he conducts a choir of some classes. "In the third year (called in this school the ninth class) I am now trying to get the pupils to sing solo. That is quite something, because hardly anyone dares to do it. I tell them that I understand, because I have to do it in my cabaret school as well. I am trying to create an atmosphere of trust and confidence, so that pupils have the feeling that it is always okay, no matter that they think they did not do well. Some of them hardly make any sound. But they are there and they do it: 'I can sing a song on my own for my class'. I am proud of them at those moments."

Gijs does not have the feeling that he is consciously planning his career. "It happens. I kind of land on things which I can use for the following step." On the other hand he made a very conscious choice for his next step in the Academy of Cabaret. He knows that within five years he wants to play as a cabaret artist-musician. He describes his career path as a 'dotted line', which enables him to take on other things than he planned, but which are inspiring for him. "But I certainly have my clear goal."

The importance of music

Music plays a big role in Gijs' life. "I wake up with it and I go to sleep with it, I teach it and I practise it, I am thinking about it continuously."

Psychologically and socially things deepen, because he gets older and more experienced, and last but not least through his new school. "I have to sing a lot there, and I feel that these songs touch me more and more emotionally, much more than before. I saw a theatre performance made by elderly people, and the way they sang and just did it, it moved me tremendously. It is the way they do it; earlier on I was not tapped into that. Now I am. The social context gets more and more important for me. It is a totally different emotional experience from what happens while playing the clarinet. In the past I could listen to the beautiful line and the technical perfection for example; now it is something new, I feel the tenderness of it, the vulnerability of this elderly person doing this, I pay attention to the text, it is in a way far more complete."

Basically Gijs doesn't do other things outside music and theatre; it is all fulfilling for him. What sometimes troubles him is the fact that he is such a perfectionist, and can be so critical about himself that he has the feeling that nothing is ever good enough. He tends to take criticism of other people as the truth per se. "My mother said some time ago something about this that made me think, saying: 'When someone gives you criticism it might as well be that this person is investing in you, helping you to improve'. I had never considered it from that point of view. But I need to make this switch in my head. I keep thinking when I am not satisfied because I do not consider it perfect enough, that I should not have done it yet. But then you can never do anything, because it is never perfect. I have not come to terms yet with these kinds of issues."

Learning by doing

Gijs has learned a lot by doing and reflecting. "I try to have a good eye for the response of the children. See what works and what does not. From time to time I invite a colleague to my lessons in order to have feedback. I try to be aware of subtle things, like when my class is not quiet I try to make less movement in order to bring them to rest. I also try to connect things that move me, like political things to down-to-earth examples which appeal to children. I connected for example awareness about the slave trade to a barn of chickens, next to my parents' house. In this barn there are on average some 40.000 young chickens, being brought up in six weeks. Then, because there is not a Dutch company willing to do this, people of a German company come in, and then someone takes four chickens in one hand and four in his other hand, and stuffs them all together in a small box. From the 40.000 chickens to be slaughtered, 10.000 arrive alive. So I link that to the slave trade, and I get reactions after I have told such a story. They then suddenly realise what slavery has actually encompassed."

Gijs does a lot of writing after each day of work in order to reflect and learn from his experiences: "If I don't do that I am losing it." He has the feeling that there is still a lot to learn in the artistic, educational and social field. "Leading a choir with 100 children, which I am going to do for example. Artistically I think I am learning a lot by taking up my new study and connecting it to my music." And also there is this feeling of happiness: "I am actually quite satisfied about what I have done. I find it *cool* how I did it, and cool that I am allowed to do it. That I can do something here, and something there."

Aims for the future

Gijs has a lot of ambitions. "My longer term ambition is to make something on a big stage, and tour through the country, as a cabaret artist. I am not sure yet, but I think it will be for children. But a short while ago I made something for adults and I liked that very much as well."

Music plays a big role in this ambition. "I write texts for songs and I write the songs. The funny thing is that I am more direct and to the point when I write a text for a song than writing a text to be spoken. My dream has to do with the camping from my youth. I would like to organise arts workshops with people I have sorted out, where people come while camping. I want to feel that intensely, like a community."

But that is the future: "I am not ready enough to make something myself. I need the support of my school. If I would only have my jobs, I would do too much of the same, at the cost of other things that I want to develop. And I need feedback of people. Sometimes I find it painful to realise that, but that's how it is."

Gijs describes himself as someone who loves people: "I love designing things, and I love entertaining people. I am extravert, though I have an introvert side as well, which I show once in a while. I do not always have to entertain people; I try also to be somewhere without having to do something about it."

He needs to cope with a lot of things: "I feel very responsible for many things. And I like that, although sometimes it feels like a huge pressure. I am high-spirited and a planner. I am a super perfectionist, which is often very painful for me."

A short term aim of Gijs is to find a place to live in Amsterdam. Travelling from Groningen to Amsterdam and back is quite demanding, but he has made this choice. It might mean though that he would have to quit his job at the secondary school, but that is something he is not ready for yet.

Interview held October 31, 2005 in Groningen

1 One of the several schools in the Netherlands that are based on certain different pedagogic views.
2 Higher general secondary school.
3 Integrated cluster of harmony, analysis, music and cultural history and performance practice.
4 Academy for Cabaret in Amsterdam.
5 Culturele Kunstzinnige Vorming: Cultural Artistic Development; CKV 1, 2 and 3 are subjects in secondary schools, where tuition in the different arts is organised in an integrated way.

Sanne Posthuma

Born in 1973 in Enschede in the Netherlands, Sanne played the piano and started jazz and pop singing when she was 16 years old. In 1991 she went to the Hilversum Conservatoire where she graduated in 1996. Meanwhile she took up Musicology at the Utrecht University where she graduated in 2004. In 1998 Sanne worked in an internship at the Paris Conservatoire. Between 1999 and 2001 she was project administrator for the project 'Promuse' on Professional Integration and Continuing Education of Musicians, initiated by the Association Européenne des Conservatoires. After that she was appointed International Relations Officer at the North Netherlands Conservatoire in Groningen. From 2004 Sanne decided to pursue a teaching career; she built up a career as a vocal teacher in pop and jazz and currently teaches in Amsterdam and Almere, both in music schools and a private practice.

Sometimes I see a pupil doing something and then I suddenly understand what I am doing myself. A pupil can be a mirror. That is a kind of peer learning.

Sanne Posthuma was born in Enschede in 1973 in a family of three daughters. Her father works as a psychotherapist in a psychiatric hospital and is about to retire. Sanne's sister Marrit is three years older and her sister Jente is one and a half years younger. The oldest sister is a teacher in the Dutch language, and the youngest is a writer. When the children were young the mother studied Dutch at a higher education institution. Sanne has a good relationship with her sisters and parents, and feels that they have been influential in her life in a positive way. She lives together with her partner Marlon. In September 2006 she expects a baby.

Music in childhood

Sanne's father played the cello. "In our family we were used to making music." All girls had piano lessons from the age of six years. Sanne's older sister changed to the flute and Sanne and her younger sister changed at a later stage to singing. "At home there was a lot of singing; when we went on holiday we were always singing. My father would occasionally take the cello or double bass and accompany us, but that did not happen much. However with my sisters I made a lot of music."

Sanne's parents listened to pop music, like the Rolling Stones, Neil Young and Bob Dylan. "That is what we heard all the time at home, and it influenced us." The piano lessons however, which, after a short period with a female private teacher, took place at the music school, were classically oriented. Sanne liked playing the piano, although, now that she is a music teacher herself, she thinks her teacher could have been far more stimulating.

"He approached everything from the technical side and never said anything about the background of the music. So I would play Schubert, for example, without really understanding the music. People told me I was very musical but for me they were just notes. I loved playing, but I had no idea about the story or meaning behind the notes. In contrast I knew a lot about the content and background to pop music."

When Sanne and her sister Jente became less interested in classical music their teacher tried to draw them towards jazz. "He took a book with the music of Gershwin and played it with us." When the sisters were sixteen and fifteen years old, they took another teacher, who was more schooled in pop music.

Playing the piano had been the choice of both Sanne's parents and herself. When she was 10 years old the music school offered her a year of free violin lessons, because she seemed quite talented. But Sanne did not like it, mainly due to the attitude of the violin teacher: "The teacher was awfully severe, 'do this, do that, stand straight', it went on and on." After one year she stopped and never touched her violin again.

Music at primary school was not spectacular, mainly dependent on the interest of the teachers. Sanne remembers that in the 4th class she had a teacher who sang a lot with the class. She enjoyed that.

Adolescence: school, singing, choice of profession

After primary school Sanne went in 1985 to the Atheneum[1], which went well. Meanwhile making music continued and at some point Sanne became interested in singing. "My oldest sister started to sing in a pop band, and when I was 16 and my youngest sister 15, we wanted to do that as well. I did it at the music school and that went so well that I was advised to take singing lessons. I then had singing lessons for one year, being 17 years old by then, and my vocal teacher suggested that I should consider going to the conservatoire. So then I started to think that over, which is remarkable, because although I liked singing I had enormous stage fright."

Looking back at the period of her childhood and adolescence Sanne feels that the fact that she was bullied as a child, especially in primary school, played a major role in her early life. "This bullying went on for over a year and after that I was sort of an outsider. I was a sweet child, and I never wanted to join in bullying other children, so at some point they went after me. My parents supported me of course, but they tried not to interfere, because they knew that it would get back to me afterwards. I felt very unconfident. Until one moment, at the age of sixteen, I performed as a singer in a music school concert, attended by many class mates. When I had sung one line the audience in the hall began to yell and cheer. I then thought: 'What the hell is happening?' I was not used to this praise from my peers at all! From that moment on things went a lot easier. So actually I may have thought: 'I will show you…' I feel that my stage fright, next to the fact that I am a bit insecure by nature, somehow has to do with this period of bullying. I had, also later

during my studies, perhaps tried too hard to prove to myself that it was not fun anymore."

Sanne had never seriously considered her future profession, music was just one of several options. But her parents as well as the music school had given advice in this direction. "When thinking about going to the conservatoire I was afraid I would be too lazy to practise the classical piano, but singing was another matter of course, especially as you have to practise less."

She meanwhile had another teacher for piano, who as soon as he heard that she was considering going to go to the conservatoire, also started to practise ear training with her. But Sanne did not feel very motivated anymore to play the piano. She did not learn to improvise, nor did she learn anything about chords.

Her choice for the conservatoire was a hesitant one, and not underpinned by clear views on her future profession. "It was merely that I liked the idea. And I was convinced that it should not be the only thing I would be doing in the future." In the period that Sanne took her final examination at the Atheneum and prepared her entrance examination for the conservatoire, she also arranged to go abroad for a year to take up the study of psychology in Aix en Provence in France.

Nevertheless Sanne took an entrance examination at the Hilversum Conservatoire, "just to find out whether I would be suitable for the study anyway." To her utter surprise she was admitted in the first year. She had not intended this, mainly aiming for a place in the preparatory year.

She was persuaded by the members of the jury to accept the offer. "They told me that it was up to me whether to go abroad or not, but that they could not guarantee that I would be admitted again next year. Looking back I regret that I let myself be pushed, because actually I was too shy and immature to start the study; it would have been so much better if I had first taken the year abroad in order to wake up and become more adult."

Period at the Hilversum Conservatoire

Sanne decided to start at the Hilversum Conservatoire and abandoned her plans to go to Aix en Provence. She went to live in Utrecht, "not many students of the conservatoire would go and live in Hilversum; you either went to Amsterdam or Utrecht." She went to Utrecht together with a friend from Enschede; her sister lived in Utrecht already, and soon Sanne had a circle of friends in the house where she lived, all students from Utrecht University.

There was a lot to adapt to once Sanne entered the conservatoire. "In secondary school I was always very good in what I did. Now at the conservatoire there were suddenly many people being very good in what they did. I was 18 years old, which was a lot younger than the average age of the jazz students; they were around 23 years old. I had only seriously been engaged in jazz for half a year, whereas some of

the other students had worked in jazz for several years before entering the conservatoire."

In itself the education at the Hilversum Conservatoire went well; the theoretical subjects were quite easy for her, as Sanne had excellent aural skills. "With the singing itself the lessons went well, but performing was quite an issue." After half a year Sanne told her mother that she might change studies. "I found it all a bit scary, and I had little contact with the other students. But later in that year I found a friend, who was as timid as I was. She still is my best friend. Together we took it on in the conservatoire."

Sanne's teachers were Deborah Brown in the first year, Humphrey Campbell in the second and third year and in the last two years she had lessons with Gé Titulaer.

> Everybody came for Deborah Brown, because she was quite famous, so I had subscribed to study with her as well. I used to practise a song in the train to Hilversum, go to my lesson, sing the song for her and then she basically said: 'Yeah, fine, great, thanks. Okay, see you next week'. So that made me feel that studying at the conservatoire was a piece of cake. She is a very good singer, but I learned that this does not always mean that you are a good teacher as well. In the next year, in the lessons with Humphrey Campbell, things changed completely and I was challenged to work. Twice a year there was a students' concert for jazz singers and then you were supposed to sing two songs. Fourteen singers would perform, a kind of factory you could say. There were always a few who feigned illness. That was it and then you had to wait for another half year. For the rest you were expected to sort out things for yourself and to organise your own performing opportunities. But you needed musicians for that, and in comparison to instrumental musicians there were a lot of singers in the school, so you had to be really confident to ask them and I couldn't do that. At that time I found it all quite normal, but now I think differently. I feel that when you educate someone to be on the stage you have to make sure that she is actually *able* to be on the stage. Of course one's own initiative is important, but a balance is certainly required. I think I learned a lot from it. I was young, used to a school system and shy. Everything I was told I took for granted. I was not inquisitive or enterprising yet, where I think that once you have those skills you learn much more. If I had started my studies a few years later I would have had more self-confidence and initiative. I would have understood better what was important and perhaps have waited on the first row for a masterclass. Now I pushed myself to the background during those kinds of events: 'Let others do it, I am too shy'. And nobody could change this. You need a kind of mentor, who can of course be your own principal study teacher; he knows

> what is wrong, what you are doing and what you aren't doing. It is all about attitude. Often teachers would say to me: 'It is good to be on the stage'. 'Yes, indeed', I would say, but it was left there. I found it hard to approach other musicians. It is such a world of everybody looking at each other in a judgemental way, 'this one is good, that one is less good'. I felt it was very arrogant to approach other musicians asking them to make music with me or to go to jazz sessions. There was an atmosphere of competition, which is logical. Of course it is less apparent when you are relaxed about it. In my third year I got more courage to ask people to play with me. It needed time, and by that time I knew the students better. I preferred to make music with people I liked, even if they played less well than very good musicians whom I didn't like so much.

When Sanne was in the second year of the conservatoire her mother fell ill with cancer. It was very serious and her mother was told that she would not live longer than five years at the maximum. But miraculously her mother survived the cancer. Sanne often wonders how it is possible that during those terrible months of uncertainty she kept going. "When there was a recital where my mother was present, and even later on, during my final examination she was there, I would think, 'Yes, you see! She's still here!' I did not want to know. I withdrew; my sisters dealt with it in a very different way. My oldest sister was totally involved and always there. My youngest sister was very emotional, whereas I tried to react more pragmatically. But it was a very difficult time, also because it was a form of cancer that can be inherited by daughters, so we were examined as well. It is incredible that my mother survived and was actually cured."

In her third year of the conservatoire Sanne started to combine her study with Musicology at the Utrecht University. Her specialisation was in Art Policies and Management. "I wanted to deepen my theoretical insight. I found my study at the conservatoire interesting, but I had a lot of friends at the university and I somehow wanted to use my mind in a different way as well. Besides that, I was convinced that I wanted to be in music in the future. Therefore I wanted to make sure that if I did not want to be on the stage anymore, I would still be able to do other things in music."

Sanne found the study very interesting, but the management part was not practical enough. Nevertheless she felt that she learned a lot about cultural life in the Netherlands. In the end, after a long period of non-involvement in the study, she received her master's degree in 2004.

Learning environment and the role of teachers

"There were so many students in the conservatoire who took their own initiative,

that it was stimulating, hearing all that around you. All this choice is good. But for people who are less enterprising, like me, a smaller learning environment is better, I think. You drown less easily then. I saw people shirking and opting out during their study and nobody cared. I never sang in the big band for example, even though it was part of the curriculum. But I was shy and kept silent about it, which was, I think, not a big deal. There were way too many singers, they admitted about 15 Jazz singers per year. What does Holland do with all these graduated jazz singers? I experienced the conservatoire as inspiring and grisly at the same time. Being surrounded by people who play all day, and do all kinds of things was inspiring. Masterclasses from time to time were inspiring as well. I look back to this time with pleasure. It is totally different from a university; you have much more contact with people, you must do a lot together, you cannot do it on your own and that is good. Studying at the conservatoire plays a much bigger role in your personal development than studying at university, I think."

The jazz singers in the conservatoire were mainly female, and the other students were mainly male, but Sanne does not feel that they lived in split worlds.

The teachers Sanne had differed a lot: "Deborah Brown was a good singer, but I didn't learn very much from her, besides some things about timing and repertoire. Campbell was very involved with what I did and stimulated me personally. He took me apart a number of times, telling me to *do* something with my big musicality. He tried to make me cry. I had the feeling that he tried out this attitude of breaking you down in order to reach you emotionally. I don't know how I feel about that, except as a teacher you should be very careful with your students. Campbell did really good things and he taught me to sing from my emotion. But I was just young and could only think 'they are not going to get me', instead of anything else. This process of 'letting go' emotionally was actually very critical for me, because all the other things I had to learn were, except for the singing technique, really no big deal for me. So actually this was the most important thing I wanted to learn, and which I still couldn't do. My stage fright was of course very much connected to that." Sanne feels that only later she understood a lot of what Humphrey Campbell had talked to her about.

Sanne does not have many typical memories of her third teacher at the conservatoire, Gé Titulaer. "He was thorough. The learning process went very gradually with Gé. I think I learned quite a lot from him." The fact that Sanne had three teachers was normal in the jazz department: "In the conservatoire it was felt that you shouldn't be too long with one teacher, you were encouraged to change after a few years."

Getting rid of stage fright

The stage fright was sometimes so hefty that it threatened to take away Sanne's pleasure in singing. "But once the concert was over I could have a good feeling, but I was so nervous… Nevertheless I loved it enough to continue doing it. I also had a

strong urge to overcome it. In the end that happened." Since two years Sanne feels more or less freed from her stage fright. The process started after graduation. "I didn't do so many things after graduation. At some point I got a request to sing in some kind of 'marriage and party' band in the eastern part of the Netherlands. The singer was pregnant and I was asked to replace her for a while, and I thought: 'Okay, let's do it, nobody knows me there'. Besides I could use the money and it was for three evenings per week. The music was really horrible, and the first evening I wondered what on earth I was doing there and thanking God that nobody in the audience knew me. But however, I *was* on the stage, for three nights a week and at a certain moment I noticed that I became more relaxed and that it went more easily. When I stopped there I had not yet overcome it. Since two years I have, and I know now that the only thing that can really help one is building up experience, and to think: 'What on earth could go wrong?' Thus you turn it around and start singing very consciously out of joy in music-making." Sanne feels that the older she gets, the more she can handle her stage fright, because "you learn more and more to live out of yourself and less out of the view of other people."

Looking back at the conservatoire period

There is one thing Sanne clearly missed in her study and that is improvisation. "During the opening day of the conservatoire one of the other students asked whether we would have lessons in improvisation. She got as an answer that we were absolutely not yet ready for that. She said: 'But this is why I am at the conservatoire isn't it?' The staff was annoyed with her for this remark, but I thought that she was right. The amazing thing was that there were no singing teachers who could teach you to improvise, and if they could, they didn't show it. Rob Madna[2] took me on his own initiative because he wanted me to learn to improvise. I worked with him twice, but I found it so scary and confronting that I let it go. Later I have often asked myself why on earth I did not accept his kind offer and was too shy and lazy to go on with it. Jazz is based on improvisation and instrumentalists also learn to improvise. There were singers who tried to improvise, but then other students would react like 'Oh, here's one wanting to *scat* again'. Those singers who could do it learned it mainly by themselves."

Sanne does not know whether she was well prepared at the conservatoire to teach. There were a lot of things she had to learn afterwards, just by doing it. "At the conservatoire there was this feeling in the air about teachers being 'failing performers', so I shared that idea and had the feeling that teaching would not be for me. I now realise that this is a totally wrong attitude."

She feels that it is quite a natural process that students only find out after graduation what they actually need and are not interested in offerings of courses in for instance business skills during their period at the conservatoire. But Sanne also feels this might change once the education is offered in a more practical way. "Not

talk about what you are going to do after graduation, but do something practical *now*, for example organise a tour or whatever. Of course I was ambitious during the conservatoire period, but I found it hard to make things happen. When I tried to organise a concert I often felt a nuisance even *asking* for a concert. I couldn't sell myself."

Development of career

A very important period for Sanne came when in 1998 she got an internship at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris, in the framework of her study in Musicology at the Utrecht University.

"It happened by sheer coincidence. My youngest sister lived in Paris for a while and I felt very attracted to the idea of staying in Paris for a certain period. At some point we just stepped into the Paris Conservatoire and I succeeded in arranging an internship there. It was in a period in which I did very little with music. When I started in this internship I realised how highly motivated all these people in the jazz department were. The level was really very high, the musicians were wonderful, it was all extremely inspiring. There were some marvellous festivals. I went to all recording shops. I worked in the production unit of the jazz department, I had actually to generate my work myself, which was quite new for me. I helped Marc-Olivier[3] a bit, and in the end I assisted in the organisation of the Jazz Festival de la Villette. I had a wonderful time in Paris, making contact was very easy. My big example there was how motivated all these people dealt with music and how different French jazz is from the jazz I knew, French jazz was much more experimental. It motivated me very much in an artistic sense."

Then the ball started to roll. Sanne realised that she wanted to work in such an environment. "I realised that I needed this musical kind of environment around me, and that this was critical for me." The Director of the Paris Conservatoire, Marc-Olivier Dupin, was very positive about Sanne's work in the Conservatoire. He was in the same period Secretary General of the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, which in 1999 started a big research project about professional integration and continuing education in music. Dupin suggested in the AEC council to appoint Sanne as project administrator. The coordination of the project took place at the North Netherlands Conservatoire in Groningen, so during the following years Sanne worked at the Groningen conservatoire for the project *Promuse*. During this period Sanne also started to work on her thesis for musicology, which dealt with jazz and pop education in European conservatoires.

When the project had finished Sanne was offered the position of International Relations Officer at the North Netherlands Conservatoire, which she accepted. She started on this job in 2001 and stayed until January 2004, when she chose definitely to pursue a career path in teaching. "The work for the AEC and NNC was less of a fight than the other work in the music world. I also felt bad about never having any

financial certainty, so I felt that I needed some kind of job, next to which I could make music. So that was ideal. I only felt that I went astray from music again and let it go. I am not so good at combining different things; I have to focus. So all that experience helped me to make my decisions."

Sanne feels that working in Paris and later for the AEC and NNC was nevertheless very good for her. "In such an international environment you learn a lot. I learned things that were an advantage to my teaching, which I was gradually taking up." Meanwhile she had continued singing on the stage. She worked with a pianist, in several ad hoc formations and in the 'Hans Mantel Vocal Express' with a number of singers.

Teaching…

Sanne started to teach more or less by accident. "At the conservatoire I had to learn to teach, and I liked that. But I never regarded it as something I might take up in the future. At a certain moment I was singing somewhere, two people came to me afterwards and asked me if I would teach them, which I did. I liked it tremendously. That is how it all started. It was during my period of work for the AEC." Sanne got more and more interested and involved in teaching until she definitely decided to focus her future on that.

She started to teach privately and later on got jobs at the Amsterdam Music Education Centre and the Almere music school. Sanne hopes in the future to be able to concentrate on one school. "I want to do it well, and I cannot do all things well in three music schools."

When teaching Sanne works very intuitively. "For me the most important thing is that pupils feel at ease. Singing is something very personal. So I try to approach pupils very much from a positive attitude, and help them develop further than they expect they can."

Sanne's pupils vary in age, her private pupils are approximately between 16 and 40, but especially in Almere she even has eleven-year olds. They come to sing 'light' music or pop music. "When pupils are really musical I sometimes try to engage them in jazz, not because I think they should do that, but because there is so much to learn from it." It is not surprising that Sanne improvises with her pupils, even on very basic levels.

"I try to make them listen to many things, especially connected to those things we deal with at that moment. When timing is central for example I make them listen to outstanding examples. Singers need to learn to listen to all kinds of music, because they tend to listen to vocal music only." Sanne accompanies her pupils on the piano and focuses on ear training as well. In the music schools she works privately with her pupils, sometimes in small groups. Once a year she organises a performance, which she would like to do more often, "but it is quite an organisation and I have weekly

only 20 minutes per pupil. Sometimes that frustrates me, especially in the case of pupils who are really talented. Older pupils sometimes come once in a fortnight, but with young pupils you need to work weekly, otherwise their *flow* is gone."

Sanne also gives group courses at the music school, which she feels is worthwhile, but thinks it would be better if those group members had individual lessons as well. "It would bring the necessary informal and formal learning together."

She finds it challenging to work with singers younger than 18 year old. "Over 18 they can deal with a lot themselves and as a teacher you can approach the personal side of singing, but youngsters need to have concrete and practical assignments. Their voice is their instrument, so you need to be quite clear about what you would like them to do at home."

What she finds interesting about teaching singing is the fact that people take singing lessons for various reasons. "People who sing in a band and wish to improve their singing, people who want to find themselves through singing, those who want to do it just for fun in the bathroom, those who want to lead groups. As a teacher you deal with the *person* in the first place, feeling where the blocks are. I work a lot with associations and movement in order to overcome such blocks."

Sanne feels she learns a lot from teaching. "Teaching is an intuitive thing; I see people doing things, and as soon as something works I have learned from it as well. Sometimes I see a pupil doing something and then I suddenly understand what I am doing myself. A pupil can be a mirror. That is a kind of peer learning."

Once in a month Sanne organises a vocal workshop with another colleague for their private students. There are pupils present who have just started their singing lessons and pupils who are on the verge of entering the conservatoire. "We establish a theme, come together, a number of them sing what they have prepared. We listen to each other, comment, try to improve things and learn from it." The most important thing in teaching is trying to motivate pupils, Sanne feels. "They must feel that their singing is improving and I want them to feel good through their singing."

…and lifelong learning

Sanne learns as a musician in the first place from listening. "For me nothing has ever changed the motto in jazz: 'listen and look to the master and learn'. That means that you can learn without taking formal lessons. Pupils who grow up with a lot of music around them have an enormous advantage over pupils who don't have that experience. So listening is important and also technically you actually have to practise a lot."

Sanne feels that she always learns in quite an informal way: "I did not need a singer to learn improvising. I learned easily by picking up things. Basically I was quite lazy, so technically I don't think I ever practised enough. I think that

artistically a lot of informal learning is very valuable, but disciplined practise is really necessary for technical matters. Those two things have to be considered next to each other consciously, because once you start singing you should not think of your technique anymore."

When Sanne works with a band she mostly has a concept in mind before the first rehearsal. "When we start playing I try to influence things, in order to have it the way I have in my mind, or follow musical suggestions of the others. I cannot really explain how that works concretely. It means I listen really well, but of course it can work out like that for the others as well."

She feels she is by nature a perfectionist, but she gets easier nowadays. She feels it has to do with coping better with her stage fright. And it works the other way around: the more relaxed she is, the more she can cope with stage fright.

Continuing professional development: lessons with Floor van Zutphen

Especially important were the singing lessons which Sanne took after graduation. In the period when Sanne worked for the AEC she took the initiative to approach Floor van Zutphen for singing lessons. Floor taught at that time (and still does) at the Groningen Conservatoire. "I heard a lot of good students of hers. I went to listen to the evenings she organised for them and all of them had something beautiful and solid in their voices, which was something I was searching for. The lessons with Floor were enormously helpful. Technically I learned things from her which I had never dealt with before. She was for example capable of really clarifying breath support to me. I am absolutely very positive about her teaching. I also think that I was better in taking lessons at that time. I was in my late twenties, my attitude had changed then, I was more active, enterprising and confident."

Sanne feels that she has learned lessons after graduation: "In the conservatoire there was this attitude that the learning process is only happening *now*. I now know better, the learning process always continues; you *have* to cope, otherwise you will stand still."

Today's life in music

For the last three years Sanne has lived together with her partner Marlon. "He stimulates me to really pursue what I have in my mind. For quite a few years I have felt more at ease and do not have that urge anymore of proving myself worthwhile, so I can now go more in-depth into the content of my work. It does not mean that I am less ambitious, but it is not such a fight anymore. I do not urge myself anymore to fulfil expectations all the time."

Music plays a big role in her life. "I always sing. I listen to music, sometimes less, for example in a period when I teach a lot, I also like to listen to the silence. I often go to the library for books and CDs and then I can be absorbed in them for the rest

of the day. I am now consciously attending concerts again, because I felt I did not do that enough."

Sanne realises that the fact that she teaches a lot and performs much less has to do with her love for working with people. "Already when growing up I used to think that I wanted to have work involving important social components. I find that more in teaching than in performing, because when performing I am more focused on myself and the music, where I find the human aspect even more important than the music. For me music is the means to be engaged in social processes that I feel involved in. Music is not an aim for me, but a means. That goes for teaching, but also for my own development. I find the social processes of others and of myself very important and music is a strong means for that. So I feel very much at home in what I am doing. I have become much more at ease in what I am doing, telling myself that I am allowed to do what I *like* to do in my work." Sanne feels however that this is also easier for her, now that she has more financial means to make these choices.

Sanne is satisfied with her work and with the fact that she feels that she is continuing to develop herself. "In the end I think that I am slower than some other people in reaching the goals that fit me. It costs me a lot of time, because I often have an expectant attitude. I feel that by nature I am enterprising. I need this little push first, but once I am there…"

Changes in the profession

"I feel that singing is for all times and for all sorts of people, but since the rise of programmes such as *Idols* and *Starmakers* on television, singing and being a singer has got a new meaning for many young people. I notice it a lot in my practice where I meet those *wanna be famous* type of pupils. There is more focus on presentation. I don't mind, I go with it and try to influence it in a positive way."

Sanne feels that a big change is that subsidies for many music schools have changed so radically. People have to pay a lot more money, many of the clients can't afford to have their child in the music school anymore and the salaries of the teachers are low. It is much more rewarding financially to have a private practice, Sanne finds. She regrets this enormously, because she feels that a music school is a place where social and musical processes are so important. "I prefer to work in a music school because I can be there in an environment where I can do a lot."

Future aims

"I don't want to work full time. I want to have time for myself and my partner and in September our child will be born. I want to continue teaching and performing, hopefully together with my guitarist in the first place, writing my own arrangements. I want to keep space to choose things that appear on my pathway."

Interview held April 25, 2006 in Amsterdam.

Teachers/Music educators II

1 Comparable to grammar school, with six classes.
2 Rob Madna was a pianist, who taught the jazz violin. He was known as a very good pedagogue.
3 Marc-Olivier Dupin was at that time the director of the Paris Conservatoire.

Christine Stoeger

Christine Stoeger studied Music Education and various musical instruments at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna. Her PhD was about the development of art subjects in school during the 'Reformpädagogik' in Austria. Since 1985 she worked as assistant professor at the same university. Her work was mainly focused on music teacher training (for general music education), development of innovative music teaching models, including creative activities and building bridges between study and profession of music teachers and lifelong development in general. She also did research on creativity in music education (research semester in the USA). Christine Stoeger has been professor of music education at the University for Music in Cologne, Germany since 2003.

I really love people. I love to work with people, to communicate, find out how they think and act and in some ways music is a kind of medium for this. And it is the best medium you can have. I think art, and therefore artists, basically have this potential, this openness, this feeling of challenge, this always searching for boundaries, this tension between flow and discipline.

Childhood in Karinthia

Christine Stoeger-Hattenberger was born in 1962, in Villach in the beautiful province of Karinthia, Austria as the oldest child in a family consisting of father, mother and three daughters. Both her parents came from Karinthia. Christine grew up in Klagenfurt. Her father worked there as a civil servant and her mother was a school teacher, but was at home when the daughters were small. "My father had a very smooth career, doing his job and always doing the same things, that is how it seemed to me. Coming home at midday and going back, living the life of a 'Beamter'. I experienced my mother as being in a stressful situation, with a lot of inner tension, because of the household, the three children and my father having many demanding hobbies. He liked to hunt and he wanted to build his own house for the family, which was only ready when the kids were out of the house."

During the weekends Christine went with her parents and sisters to a small village near Spittal an der Drau, where her grandparents lived and where the new house would be built. "We always went back and forth to visit our grandparents in the weekends, because we lived in a very small apartment in Klagenfurt city. With the parents and three girls we lived in this small apartment while this house near Spittal an der Drau was built, very, very slowly. Now my parents are living in this house, the two of them, we never got to live there as a family, which is rather strange, of course. But it was not that important to us as children. Children don't want so much space, we just wanted to go out. Our grandparents' house, which was really our weekend home, was a paradise for us, because we could go out in the green and do whatever kids like to do."

Singing from early childhood on

Christine's parents sang a lot. They both sang in a choir, her father up until three years ago. While driving to the grandparents in the weekend, the whole family was always singing. "So I have the memory of many times that we were sitting in the car, singing with my parents." The three daughters would sing the first voice, her mother the middle voice and her father the tenor. All the children were musical, singing Karinthian folksongs. "In Karinthia folksongs are very popular, to this day; when you come in a restaurant, it can happen that people start singing folksongs, and everyone knows them. So there is really a sort of common, shared music that we had, which were original folksongs stemming from an oral tradition, not the popular folksongs you hear on television. And even now, when we meet, we sing together. It was important in the sense that we got a natural connection with music. For me it is very much emotionally tied to family and family history. It was a very important part of my childhood."

Christine went to primary school in Klagenfurt, which went well, but was not exciting in a musical sense. There was very little opportunity for singing, which was not really a problem for her, because there was a lot of singing going on at home and during family gatherings.

When Christine was seven years old she started playing the recorder and at the age of ten she added playing the piano.

Relationship with the parents

Christine remembers clearly the moment, being nine years old, when her mother started to work again as a schoolteacher, which was very demanding for her mother. "I so intensely felt the change which was going through the whole family. She was a teacher at my school and I felt how she was always in a hurry. Coming home, I had the feeling that I more and more had to deal with all my things on my own. But mentally she was really always there and she was very open. I really appreciate what she did. She tried very hard. But I think she was over-challenged with this work, and she needed to recover. When she was fifty she retired, because she had a lot of psychosomatic symptoms and she needed about five or six years to recover. Now she is a really happy woman. But then it was too much for her. She is in my mind a person who was always there for us, but always being in a hurry and overstressed, which made an impression on me. We reacted very differently and since I was the oldest one, I felt responsible for the situation. I very often tried to voluntarily give tasks to myself, I said I would do the dishes before I went to school or I would clean the bathroom. I felt so responsible for her and the situation. But it was like a big hole you couldn't ever close. I think I felt guilty for everything she had to do. All three daughters struggled a lot with our father, my youngest sister and myself the most, about his paternity and about this injustice of my mother having so much to do and him coming home and sitting down and saying 'could

you bring me a fork' or something. In some ways he was a very good father. Emotionally, we were always very sure that he loved us. But we couldn't cope with this role divide of theirs. Today, I would say it was hard for him too. Maybe even harder, because he saw that his daughters didn't appreciate what he was doing, because we didn't want this house for example. We had no interest in his hobbies, his hunting. We would cry when he came back and he was so proud of the dead animals he brought home to share. So I think it was hard for him to be the only man in this family of women and to be a man coming from a history of men who all had special roles. He didn't change anything through all this time; between my mother and her daughters there were sort of alliances."

Nevertheless Christine regards her childhood as a happy one. "In general I have the feeling I got a lot of basic confidence. This is what they gave all of us and it was very strong. I remember with very emotional and positive feelings these musical experiences together, and this staying together in the weekends. I have very positive memories of our many travels, when we were stuck together with five persons and a dog in this small car, sitting and talking. My father bought a little hut in the mountains and this was a place we often went to in winter and summer in the weekends, which was great for us kids, though it must have been horrible for my mother who had to carry all the things up to this hut and to organize it. In general, I felt mostly really happy as a child; this struggling was not something that threw me off track. It was not a threat to my confidence. It was more something that was going on between my parents, who were not really struggling with one another. But it was sort of dealing with a change in society, within a context that was fixed."

The recorder and the piano; gymnasium with music

Christine got her recorder lessons at the conservatoire[1] in Klagenfurt. They were private lessons, with later additional lessons for recorder quartet. The choice for the recorder was her parents'; they regarded the recorder as the first instrument children should learn. Christine liked playing the recorder tremendously. Nevertheless the piano attracted her as well, and had for many years. "I absolutely wanted to play the piano and I did it on my own, from the age of five or six. My grandfather had a piano in the house, so in the weekends I always tried to get to the piano. And then he gave the piano as a present to us. I remember that it was a very old one, it was never in tune. I think it sounded terrible, but for a child it doesn't matter. I don't know why I didn't start to learn the piano by having lessons. Playing the recorder was a very fixed idea and I was a very obedient child. But when I was ten years old, I told my mother I absolutely wanted to have piano lessons."

Christine then got lessons at the same institution: "I remember that my parents were not so sure it was a good idea. They thought it would be too much for me. I was a very thin and small child, but I think something like fighting came into me. I found it so fascinating to play the piano; there were so many other possibilities in

comparison with the recorder. I don't think I had a model or an idol, I didn't hear much piano music and we did not go to piano concerts." But the experience of freely improvising ended from one day to the other. Christine got lessons in a very traditional way, where there was no room for her playful way of approaching music.

Meanwhile, when she was ten years old, Christine went to a gymnasium with a focus on music, housed in an old abbey, Stift Viktring, near Klagenfurt. At the gymnasium it was compulsory to play an instrument at the conservatoire, and the pupils had five hours a week of music lessons. Christine loved the choice for this school that her parents made for her. The idea of music as a profession and hence choosing for this school was not on her mind at that time. At school she had intensive courses of music theory, having to write fugues and harmonisations and making analyses, all this in addition to her regular courses of mathematics and languages. Christine was not very thrilled with the contents of the music lessons or about the inspiration the lessons gave her. She had however a passion, which was literature; she read a lot. Nobody ever saw her without a book. She was especially interested in German literature, and had an outstanding teacher for that subject.

There were a lot of musical activities at the gymnasium, like choir singing in the afternoon and next to that Christine accompanied a lot on the piano, and played in a recorder quartet with which she sometimes toured through Austria, performing recorder music.

Teachers during adolescence

Christine started with a female teacher for recorder, whom she liked very much. Two years later she got another, male, teacher whom she describes as 'very good in technical and musical things, but being a very bad role model as a person'. "I loved his music and I respected his ideas and authority, because he really made us play better and that was absolutely all right. He was a very profiled person and musically he had a good reputation, he was well-known. However he was abusive, and the older I became the more I kept my distance from him. But on the other hand, we had so much to do with him as a music teacher. Once a year we had a week of playing flute and performing and rehearsing, to make our playing better and to prepare concerts. I had a lot of friends in that group of recorder players, and it was very important for us to hold together. We passed on this knowledge, of how to keep distance. I was not one of his victims, but he tried to come close. It was something that we pushed away, what could you do? It was really a paradoxical situation, because we loved the music and music-making, which was really of high quality. Once you were old enough you knew how to keep your distance from him and it wasn't dangerous anymore. But it was dangerous for younger girls who didn't know what was going on. There was no alternative. There was another

recorder teacher who was a woman, and she was not good. So with him it was always playing with limits and boundaries."

Christine has much praise for her piano teacher at that time. "She was mentally and musically very strong and she had an independent mind. She lived alone, which was absolutely not usual at that time; she was a role model for me. She performed 20th century music, which was uncommon at that conservatoire. Her teaching was very meaningful, she asked, talked, declared, and explained. I think it was a kind of intellectual teaching that she did. She was very respectful and regarded the students as adult learners. The recorder teacher was more of an intuitive teacher, who tried to change this sound or that sound. We never learned anything about the construction of a piece, but he had very good ideas with small corrections, pictures, or something to increase the quality of the playing. But this was always in a very intuitive way, using metaphors for example. The female teacher was more of an intellectual."

The choice for music as a profession

Christine describes her choice for the music profession as 'pragmatic'. She only made this choice after she had finished the gymnasium. "I had never regarded music as a profession for myself. I had been thinking it over for a long time, but I didn't get a strong feeling that *that* was what I wanted. I was really passionate about many things. I think that choosing for music in the end had something to do with a mix of intuition and pragmatic thinking, and having such a long history of dealing with music. I came to see that having been at the music gymnasium was a good precondition for a study. And when I got to know my fellow students I knew why, because they had to learn it from the beginning."

Christine decided to take recorder for the *Konzert Examen*[2] as a principal study together with School Music.[3] She felt that her parents would regard school music as a safe choice for her future. As a second subject she chose German literature.

Going to Vienna

Christine wanted to study at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst[4] in Vienna, although the Academy in Graz would have been nearer to Klagenfurt. But her choice was due to the fact that 'the first address in Austria to study the recorder' was in Vienna with professor Hans Maria Kneihs. In 1980 she did an entrance examination and was admitted to the academy in Vienna.

Going to Vienna was very hard for her as a young woman. "It was shocking for me. Because I left a small town and nearly rural life. Coming to Vienna for me was like going to a totally different country. The big problem wasn't to leave my parents and home, because the last two, three years I had spent much time outside of our little apartment, needing my own space, and meanwhile I had a boyfriend, whom I

had met at the gymnasium. The big problem of leaving Karinthia was leaving my boyfriend and to be absolutely alone because he had to go to the military, to do a year there. When I came to Vienna, it looked grey and dirty and the Viennese were very unfriendly. I was shocked at the beginning, and very lonely and longing to go home. And I made a deal with myself not to go home every week, which was too expensive anyway. I had my money, and I had to cope with it. But of course I entered the Music Academy and I got friends there and things became more and more familiar. But the stress-shock lasted for half a year. I tried to save money by not heating my room. I did my exercises on the piano and then I got tendonitis in both arms. I couldn't do anything for six weeks, after having been in Vienna for only two months. I think it was absolutely psychosomatic, being so far away, in such a different context, in this big town and so lonely there and apart from family and boyfriend."

Christine thinks that the physical problems she developed were also due to the fact that her piano teacher in Vienna was very demanding, neglected Christine's small hands and giving her pieces to play that were far beyond her possibilities. "I couldn't get my hands stretched that far. And then I had a real crisis through this tendonitis in both arms and I went back for two weeks to Karinthia. I felt really bad about that, because I felt as if I hadn't made it. It was a very important crisis for me to grow up, to say to myself, 'this is not okay; just stand up and go back to Vienna.' There was not a single moment in which I considered not going back. It was only a moment of rest for me. It was a crisis of suddenly going from childhood to adulthood. It was a big learning step for me. I went back after two weeks, still having in my ears my father saying, 'what about you, what are you doing here?' He didn't really look at me. He did not mean to send me away, but it was so hard for me when he said that."

Christine kept feeling a foreigner in Vienna. In Klagenfurt she had spoken dialect, even the teachers at the gymnasium spoke dialect. In Vienna there were students who distanced themselves from students who came from rural parts of Austria. But Christine gained confidence, because she turned out to be very successful and competent in her studies.

Teachers

Christine's Music Science[5] teacher professor Heller was an inspiring teacher. "In every lesson he gave and every speech he held, there was something to learn for a whole life, not only for music. He was a really adventurous man in his thinking and doing and gave me the feeling that whatever music you choose, it is always totally interesting to go into and to think about it."

Christine was also satisfied about Hans Maria Kneihs, her recorder teacher. "In some ways he was a very good teacher; in the sense of structuring work, being against this senseless exercising. He was very intellectual, like my piano teacher in

Klagenfurt, but much more demanding. I wasn't so used to that in recorder playing; I had no idea at all what I was doing. Often he would say, 'Okay, it is wonderful what you have played and I will tell you what you have done. But next time, please think about what you are doing and try to put it into words and a structure and try to communicate about that.' My recorder teacher was very important for me, in different ways even, because he was also the dean of the School Music department. He was young, and a very political and very inspiring person, very profiled."

But Christine's best teacher was her piano teacher Harald Osberger, whom she got after she had recovered from the physical problems with her arms. "I changed from this woman who really ruined my arms; my recorder teacher helped me to do that. He found out that I had difficulties and encouraged me to change teachers, although there was an implicit rule never to change teachers. So that really was a big thing. He helped me find the right teacher, and that teacher was absolutely the best teacher I ever had. He had this intellectual side, he was very innovative, sensitive and was always looking for the needs and aims of his students."

Choices during the study

Christine found it hard to combine her study at the Music Academy with German literature and quit that. She would regret it later: "I should have done this differently, but I was too scared. During the first lesson, where hundreds of students were present the teacher said, 'most of you will leave.' I couldn't cope with that, it was really as if he meant to make people scared. When I went through the literature list, I thought 'I love this literature so much but I cannot combine my love for literature with this horrible man'. I think I needed a person who would have encouraged me to have confidence."

The choice for combining the recorder with School Music had been a pragmatic one as well; Christine wanted in the first place to have lessons with Kneihs. "I loved the school music studies much more. I wished to have many different things to do and to learn. The recorder study was so specialized and I am absolutely not the specialist type. I didn't feel at home between the specialists. They were very nice people, but it was strange for me what they were doing the whole day and what they were living for. I considered it so silly that, when there is so much going on in the world around us, for them the most important thing was to have this flute or that flute. And I never wanted to become a performer, I knew that from the beginning. I had performed in this recorder quartet and I loved that, I was really deep into that, but to see it as a profession was not a world I was longing for."

End of study and start of career

At the end of Christine's study in School Music, just before her graduation in 1985, a professor had been appointed for didactics, and he asked her to stay on as an assistant for pedagogy. At that point she decided to terminate her recorder and

piano study. "I saw that not everything could go on, because meanwhile, in 1983, I had also started piano as an instrumental teacher study. I finished the recorder instrumental diploma and I graduated in School Music. And it became clear when I had my diplomas that the recorder time was at an end. It was not because I didn't like to play the recorder, but there was simply nothing more to gain."

From 1983 Christine started to share an apartment with her boyfriend, "being a revolution for my parents", but soon after graduation she met her current husband, Wolfgang Stoeger, who had studied composition for a while and graduated in music education. They married in 1987.

Starting to work as an assistant in music pedagogy meant a big change in Christine's life. It was like pioneering. She felt quite vulnerable in her job, having no practical experience at all in teaching in schools. The new professor had seemed very promising upon appointment, but he turned out to be quite weak and hesitant. "What was really scary was that the freedom and responsibility of the job did not really fit him. I don't know why he chose me, we had a good communication, but looking back I was a little girl at that time. It was a paradoxical situation in some ways, because we both had to learn everything. And he excluded himself from the others more and more. He should have been the person to communicate and network and build up, to make bridges between the school and its officials, and whatever. That is what the new dean wanted him to do, but he excluded himself and only did his seminars. More and more all questions were passed on to me, which was really absurd, because I was not experienced. And this became a big dilemma for me. Had I overseen that, I would not have taken the job. So after two years I gave back my contract and only kept my own two teaching seminars. Not many people understood: 'How can you give back such a wonderful position?'"

Christine then decided to gain more experience by taking a 'practical year' and started teaching in a secondary school. There were a lot of skills Christine had to learn, such as "How to sing popular songs, how to accompany these at the piano, how to deal with popular music. I learned some basics in playing drums, I learned everything about dealing with groups. I had a good teacher in this one year in school, who taught me a lot, important things about the development of roles, of dealing with big groups, dealing with discipline problems and so on."

Earning a PhD

In 1987 Franz Niermann[6] was appointed professor at the university and this changed a lot for Christine. "From the first moment on he considered me as a person to cooperate with and we really found each other in our attitude towards education. I could say he was my mentor in a way; he really respected my opinion. And so we started a very fruitful dialogue about didactics, actually it was a very intense learning process for both of us. During this process he fought to get me more hours in the

Hochschule again. Franz was a strong person and he tried to go out and open doors and he did many things I thought were right. There came other assistants; more and more teams evolved and so it started to grow. I was really passionate about pedagogy, but did not see myself as a scientist. I wanted to create an environment and build bridges to the school, bring the young teachers back to the Hochschule and give them material. Then, in 1995, I was asked to take a real full assistant's job and consider writing a PhD. I wondered for quite a while if I should do it, whether someone would be waiting for my PhD. In the end I decided to do it."

The topic of Christine's PhD was 'Reform Pedagogies in Austria'. "I tried to look at how the arts came into schools. And what the argument was to do this at the end of the nineteenth century and the first thirty years of the twentieth century, which was a period of *Reformpädagogik*. It was an international movement. I was not only focusing on music, and that was typical for me, because I love to look at other arts too, and there were much more interesting things going on in fine arts than in music." Christine earned her PhD in 1999, at the Vienna University of Music and Performing Arts.

A period in the USA; nurturing the love for research

Just after finishing her PhD study, a crisis broke out at the Vienna Academy. There were discussions between people in the department of music pedagogy which polarized, leading to a divide between groups of people. Christine found it hard. "I am more the type of finding consensus, it was a dilemma. I was really at a point where I wanted to leave the Hochschule, but I transformed this wish of going away into a research semester."

While working on her PhD, no matter how hard it was to combine with her other work and how extremely demanding it was, Christine discovered that she loved doing research. The dean granted her a research period and Christine decided to use this to work on the topic of creativity. "It was good intuition, because it fitted into so many things that I was doing. Creativity is a very interesting topic and yet there is hardly any research into creativity beyond composition and improvisation, but in a much wider sense including reception of and communication about music, and I wanted to go deeper into that. So then my husband and I looked where to go and decided on the USA, because I had never been there."

This was in 2000. At that time Christine's husband was working as a music teacher as well, and he could make arrangements in his work to join his wife. There was really no specific place where much research had been done on the subject, so Christine decided to turn things around and just choose a beautiful place with good libraries. And that was San Francisco.

> We bought a one way ticket and arranged three nights in a motel, packed our suitcases and went to the USA. When we were there it was much more

expensive than we had ever thought. After three nights in the motel, we went to another motel for ten days, to search a place to live. I did not think about creativity at all because we were sitting in the library of San Francisco, in the cellar. We had a toilet, a telephone and a computer to communicate and try to find a place to live. Then we found an apartment which was double the price we had planned. So we decided to stay in San Francisco half the time; going to a small apartment, but quite lovely. In the end we lived there for five months. From there I tried to contact schools and the American Organization of Music Education and I was really lucky that the former president of the organization was living in San Francisco and I got very good contact with her. I tried to explore the libraries there and go deep into my studies.

This was the happiest time of my life, really. I enjoyed this reading and thinking and combining it with my experiences and I was full of ideas and so happy. Sometimes I really sat with tears in my eyes, being so happy to be in this wonderful place and reading and go deep into my research; it was really wonderful. Sometimes I went to schools to see how music education was going on, but everyone asked me about Orff. They said, 'ah, someone from Austria, please tell us everything about Orff, he is God for us'. It was really hard to explain that we choose methods and combine them, that we don't have this straight Orff system.[7] So I made some contacts, but actually they were not very important to me. I only used the library. I had no lessons, I was absolutely free.

When I came back I wrote a big article about creativity. I had lots of material and I wanted to write at least a small book. But at home, everything was so exhausting and demanding. There were so many projects I was involved in and there was so much change on the horizon. Nevertheless, one year ago I started a research project in a small team to reanimate my intentions and to finally go on with evaluating the found materials. So the most important thing for me in going to the USA was to build a new context of work and new roles. After a few months I was in a new frame of mind to go into the future and oversee what I would do, what was my vision. In fact, to rise to the surface.

Appointment in Cologne as professor of music pedagogy

The period in the USA was a time of reflection for Christine. She found out that her job was not the *kind* of job she wanted to quit, but that it was time to quit her position in Vienna. "It was not even the institution that was the problem, but I wanted to get out of the situation, this political struggle, which I think was only the outside of a struggle that was going on inside me as well. There was a change going on, which I could not steer."

In 2003 Christine applied for two professorships, in Freiburg and Cologne. "Shockingly, and I really must say shockingly, I was offered both positions. I was very surprised. And then I had to decide and this took time. I finished my year in Vienna and after that I went to Cologne. It was of course a decision for both my husband and me." Christine's husband was very supportive in her choice-making and Christine eventually chose Cologne. Her husband started a business in Cologne as a music antiquarian on the internet. "He is courageous in taking new steps. That inspires me."

In Cologne Christine is responsible for running the department of School Music, teaching and doing research. She loves her job. "One should never forget that such a job is very self-guided and full of your own creation, possibilities and responsibilities. I fear it and I love it. I was really convinced that I could not do all of that. It was a very interesting process and I had to come into the role. But there was no time for that, because the others *gave* me the role, from the very first moment."

Going from Vienna was hard for her, but "in other ways, my inner state was such, that I was absolutely finished with Vienna. Although there were so many intense contacts there, with so many people, that something really broke. But at the same time it was so clear to me that I had to go."

A passion for music education

Christine describes her passion for music education as follows: "At the moment music education plays a very big role, naturally, because I am always dealing with it in different contexts. I am teaching it, I am thinking about it, I feel responsible for the students."

It is much more than just a job: "I am sure that has something to do with passion. I really get passionate when I am talking to students, because it has much to do with personal development. Being an individual and developing as an individual. And it has so much to do with children. I realise every minute I spend with them and do something, that music education is a very, very important thing."

Christine's passion has to do with music, but more with people. "I really love people. I love to work with people, to communicate, find out how they think and act and in some ways music is a kind of medium for this. And it is the best medium you can have. I think art, and therefore artists, basically have this potential, this openness, this feeling of challenge, this always searching for boundaries, this tension between flow and discipline."

Christine tries hard to make time for other things as well, such as languages and literature, and to go and see fine art. "I sometimes try to reserve time to do something absolutely not pragmatic. But this is very hard for me."

Learning as a music educator

"I learn mostly through dialogue. I am a dialogue and team learner. So the most

learning motivation I get from communication, but on the other hand, I also need time to concentrate and to be alone. I think I am often learning by accident, by seeing something and questioning it, in order for it to be a learning point. I need very strict and long-term plans. I have learned through the opportunities of team working and coaching, which I had in Vienna; I need these kinds of outside perspectives. When I came to Cologne I sorted out, with the help of a coach, what would be the starting topics for me in my new role. I tried to define them and to establish the first steps."

Informal learning

"When I was trying to play the piano as a child there was nobody to suggest to me to take lessons. I think this was an important and informal sort of thing. Like 'this is fine what you are doing and this is music.' It was always respected. And during my school time we often had informal ensembles, where I arranged something for us to play or sing. There was a lot of energy going into this. I think that that was also important. During my studies I was actually not very supportive of informal learning. Now I really try hard to make the students regard their study as something they make, as their own responsibility, and to build a sort of element into the study to help them to evolve this attitude."

Christine is not sure whether informal learning has been very important for her in the past. "I think I had such a covering, formal way in comparison with other persons, that this informal learning was more of a sort of sideway, a very important colour."

All in all Christine feels that formal education in school was a structure that went through many years of her life, and in between and around that structure a lot of informal learning took place. Now in Cologne she feels that informal learning is much more at stake in her own teaching.

Satisfaction, current and longer term aims

"I am thankful for this *Urvertrauen*, this self-confidence I have, which is very important for so many things. I don't have a high tempo in anything I do, I am really slow. I need a long time before I can say that I am really convinced of a model or something I stand for. I am satisfied with not letting anybody make me skip things or waver, and that I took my time to develop. I am not satisfied with the way I deal with mistakes. I am very strict for myself, while I so often encourage others to make mistakes and to just try. I have a lot of points of learning, which motivate me. My current aim is to make this School Music study really motivating and to develop it further. It should be something that students experience as valuable both when they study it and when they start working. I really want to show how wonderful this profession as a teacher can be, and on the other hand be realistic about it. To test your visions and at the same time have the skills to do so. In the longer term I really have visions of innovative and experimental cooperations with schools."

Christine realises that this is a high aim, but she feels the need to have that kind of aims and vision.

Changes in the profession

Christine feels that the profession of music educator has changed in many ways on the one hand and on the other it has not changed at all. "Music education as part of cultural education is my focus. I am fighting for a respectful dealing with this profession, and sometimes I feel very lonely in the environment and the culture of teaching, because I think it has not changed very much. The attitude of teaching has always been very hierarchic, and it remains this way: 'I know better than you, and you will receive this very simple and non-individual tuition.' This goes for both teachers in music academies as well as for music teachers in secondary schools. The profession has changed of course, but I feel that the demands of society are changing much faster, and that schools do not adapt. Knowledge and abilities are obtained in another way than in earlier times. Students get them everywhere, from the internet, from their peers. It is stupid to forget that, because it makes teaching in that old fashioned way such a paradox, like an island in a totally different world. Teaching pupils to be respectful, reflective individuals, but in the meantime society is at such odds with this old fashioned kind of teaching that I really cannot understand how it can go on. How can schools remain stuck in this attitude, when their surroundings have changed so much? There are many pupils in secondary schools who dislike education and who are bored and don't have the ability to change or motivate themselves. It is horrible."

Christine states that only 10 to 15% of school music graduates in Cologne take a job in a secondary school, although there is much more demand in the profession. She stresses that this information does not come from an empirical study, but that this is what she hears through her network. The students take other jobs, in the media for example, and some of them become instrumental teachers. She feels that graduates avoid teaching in secondary schools because they feel over-demanded. "I think music and arts in, let's say, an old fashioned school are especially hard to teach, because the discrepancies between what art can mean and the teaching attitude of the school are too big. I think music teachers feel this very much to be the case. And because of that attitude they get all these disciplinary problems in their lessons. The other thing is that they are absolutely not prepared. So there is not a realistic picture, they have no skills to rely on, because, before they can develop those skills in a safe environment, they are pushed into very old fashioned attitudes. Research shows that when you are over-demanded in a professional situation, you fall back into old models and say and do things you would not yourself choose to do in teaching."

One of Christine's big aims is, unsurprisingly, to build bridges between the university and the schools. She sees a good opportunity in the development of the

German *Ganztagschule*[8]; "that provides a good chance for art teachers to fill the day with useful artistic lessons and with cooperation with other institutions, and it is also a good way for music teachers to have a better standing in their school. I want to make the students fit for a start in this kind of job, to have the skills to deal with different situations, and feel strong about developing their mission. You have to stretch the boundaries, and bring students together with teachers who are on the job, asking questions and discussing problems. It is an ongoing process. When you are fifty years old, you have other questions than when you are thirty years old; you have your questions at the end of the study and all questions are very important."

Christine's ultimate goal is not to change the world, but to try and equip the students with such skills and attitudes that they can cope better with what they encounter, and hopefully, become more motivated to take on jobs as music teachers. "In addition to that, I would like to say to them, 'don't be only a music teacher in your school, but be a *school creator*, because teachers need to reflect on how their school is developing'. I think that there are opportunities here as well for being the creator of a new learning environment; we are all responsible for that. That is what I mean by having a vision. I want to continually cooperate with one or two schools who try something absolutely new, who try to give art or music a special status, and who have visions themselves that you can use as examples."

Looking back

Learning is an ongoing process for Christine: "I have learned in every new place and on every level; away from my parents, in urban life, in a big town, in the USA, while changing schools. This school in Cologne will always be one of the most important learning environments for me. The first years in Cologne were part of one of the most demanding and important learning phases for me. I sometimes wonder whether I have the capacity to choose the things that fit me best. At the moment it seems to fit quite well. But then, throughout life, there are always situations where I think: 'no, it doesn't fit; what would have developed had I chosen the other way, or the third or the fourth way?' I will never know."

Interview held February 8, 2006 in London

1 Here the term conservatoire means 'music school'. Each of the seven Austrian federal states has a conservatoire, meaning the best quality music school.
2 Comparable to the current master's degree.
3 Classroom music teacher training.
4 Currently called Universität für Musik und Darstellende Kunst (University for Music and Performing Arts).
5 Encompassing subjects like Music History, Aesthetics and Philosophy.
6 The current head of the Institute of Music Pedagogy of the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna.
7 A rather old fashioned system of music education, based on the work of the composer Karl Orff.
8 Meaning a 'whole day school'.

Jelle Hogenhuis

After graduating as a building engineer Jelle Hogenhuis decided to turn to music. He studied classical flute at the Groningen Conservatoire (Netherlands) with Peter van Munster and composition with Willem Frederik Bon. In addition to being a flute teacher Jelle Hogenhuis is a freelance player and a composer, and currently works as a flute maker most of his time. Among his compositions are pieces for small ensembles as well as some symphonic works and two short operas. For his pupils he sometimes composes and arranges jazz or pop pieces. For a period of ten years Jelle was one of the members of the Groningen Flute Quartet. Experiences in this ensemble were the root of developments to follow later. Also his work as a flute repairman came in handy. In 1987 he formed a new flute band at the music school where he teaches (De Wâldsang, Buitenpost).

I have always been a loner, but during the period at the conservatoire I really struggled to *belong* and at the same time to keep my own identity as a musician. I felt torn.

Born in 1954 in The Hague as the fifth child in a family of nine children, after one year Jelle moved to the city of Leeuwarden in the province of Frisia in the Netherlands, where he spent his childhood. Jelle's father was headmaster of a secondary school; his mother an English teacher, who became a house wife after she married. Jelle's mother played the organ, but she stopped playing after she met her husband, because he played better. "I regret that I never heard her play. In her parental home there was a lot of music-making, but for herself she just put a stop to it."

Jelle feels that the experiences he has had through the music his father listened to and his father's music-making were quite formative. His father was an organist in church and led a choir. On Sundays Jelle used to watch his father at the organ, and it made a big impression on him. "He was not a professional musician, although he had had the ambition to be one, but his mother made him learn a 'decent profession'. I think his mother saved him in a way, because he was too unbalanced and too nervous, but nevertheless his heart was in music. For myself, making music obviously had the function of *being* someone in that family. I later found out that it is very frustrating to have your self-esteem depend on your music-making. The other thing was that making music for me was a means to connect with my father, because it was hard to get into contact with him. When we played a Händel sonata together, for example, I would look at his back and see that he was enjoying it…that was very important for me. In the end I realised that I absolutely am a flautist and a musician deep down at heart, but that this element of having to be a flautist to satisfy my parents is not healthy."

Childhood

One and a half year after Jelle's birth a new brother was born, Theo, who was severely physically and mentally handicapped. Theo lived with the family for six years, when the situation became untenable and the boy had to go to a home for handicapped people. It was extremely demanding for the whole family, and also for little Jelle. He feels that he had not much of an emotional tie with Theo, who died at the age of 40. "He took all the attention that I felt was actually meant for me." Jelle was the child in the middle; "There was a group of the 'older ones' and a group of the 'little ones', and I belonged to neither of them."

Jelle had a little neighbourly friend, and spent a lot of time at his friend's home. He felt that his parents did not like this much, and that they felt guilty about it, but they would not speak about it. "I think that I was protesting already very early in life, without actually knowing why. I fled, already at the age of four and that went on for years. You can't say that I was never at home, but…"

In the past month Jelle was with his brothers and sisters in the old parental home for the last time; his father died ten years ago, and his mother was recently taken to a nursing home. "While being there again I realised that it was never a safe haven for me. I look back at my youth with mixed feelings. There was a lot of love, but it was never uttered. My father never touched us, and my mother did not touch him either. As a child it frightened me to see them so locked inside themselves. My mother had a strange way of caring for us: giving us clean clothes and a clean handkerchief on Sundays, at week days having the tea ready when we came home from school, but she herself would not be there for us, she was too busy. Her love and care showed itself in working for us. She *saw* everyone, but when she saw something happening she would not do anything about it. She was incapable of that. My father saw things as well, but he was as incapable as she was. Sometimes he would buy a box of building blocks for me, and we would construct something together. He realised well enough that our contact had to be improved, but wouldn't it have been much better if he had used words instead of buying me that box? We would sit together and I would feel slightly afraid of him. He was a man with whom I did not have a good contact and who tried to make that up to me. Being a child I did not realise that this was actually a fantastic initiative of his."

Music during childhood...

"When I was seven years old, I got organ lessons. It was a miserable experience, having to play only psalms. First the white notes, then the black ones, without any rhythm, so old fashioned and so severely Christian. My organ teacher came to our house, he taught all the children. It was terribly dry material, which did not have anything to do with music. I had these lessons for two years, it was compulsory for us. The whole family had to sit at the organ to practise, so there was a very strict schedule. My time to practise was 7.30 in the morning. I still see my little friend

from next door waiting for me on a small wall looking through the window, watching me play the organ and waiting for me to come outside…'Just wait a moment, only one minute more!' I would shout at him."

After two years of misery at the organ Jelle was allowed to stop his lessons. But his parents realised that he was a musical boy, always crazy about drum bands and playing psalms on his plastic toy-recorder along with the radio, and singing beautifully. Nevertheless for a few years nothing more was done about music.

Jelle remembers the time he spent at primary school as 'grey'. "I was a shy, quiet and withdrawn little boy, who was allowed to sit on the back bench, because he was so quiet." There was not much music in the air at primary school: "The only thing I remember is the old gnawed-off recorder of my teacher."

At home there were highlights on Sunday evenings: the whole family would sing together. "That was extremely enjoyable and everybody loved it. My father would play the organ: 'Jelle sing one more song!' We would sings psalms, but also children's songs, play sonatas, quatre mains and so on. And still… my father was not a disorganised man, but he played messy. It just was not *it*! My mother sang very strange, not rhythmically at all, which puzzled me."

The family also listened to classical music a lot, but classical music only really started to appeal to Jelle when he was twelve years old. "I remember the moment exactly; it was when I had just started secondary school. There were three recordings in the house, one of them was the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto, and that was absolutely my first love. I could not really understand what happened to me emotionally when I listened to that. It happened while I was doing my homework. My father had this little record player, which until then had been a boring thing for me, connected to dark classical sounds, and to 'being quiet because of the music on Sunday'. But now all of a sudden I woke up."

At the same time, in 1966, Jelle's parents decided to offer him music lessons again. His father often invited pupils from his school, who played an instrument, to come to their house to play, and Jelle heard it all through the ceiling. When he was offered a choice between the flute and the oboe, his choice for the flute was rapidly made. "I opened the box containing the flute and I was *sold*. So beautiful! It was a very old flute, even flaked off, but I did not care about that."

Jelle got lessons at the municipal music school in Leeuwarden from Lútzen Nijdam. His development as a flautist went incredibly fast; he started in September and in December he was already playing sonatas by Händel. Jelle liked his teacher, and found him intelligent, though not a very good player. "I learned much more from listening to recordings of Jean Pierre Rampal, thanks to my father." In the same year another boy, Leendert Runia, started to play the flute with the same teacher and after a while Jelle and Leendert started playing together and they continued to do this for years.

… and adolescence

Jelle was very motivated to play the flute. "I don't know *how* hard I worked, but I think I worked very hard. I practised and practised, for example in order to be able to play the Poulenc Sonata after four years. I really felt that this was my instrument."

Jelle did not consider making music his profession at all. At the age of five he had already decided to become an architect, just like the father of his little neighbourly friend. "I was there often, it was so relaxed there and cozy and my friend's father became my role model. I sometimes went with him to the building sites, where he used floor plans that I had already seen, and naturally I found this mighty interesting. But above all, he had a Mercedes, and all in all this of course was much more interesting than things at home. Besides, I am very good with my hands, and that also played a role. This is why I already knew that after secondary school I would take up a higher education study as building engineer. I wanted to make beautiful things. But after a while at this school, it turned out that you are not there to make beautiful things at all, you just make calculations, of how to place something without the risk of it falling. How thick a shelve should be to carry the books, for example. I was really disappointed. Every artistic initiative was killed, because the artistic part came much 'later'. 'Later' never came for me because music began calling me louder and louder."

In the end secondary school and the training for building engineer took nine years. In those years Jelle did a lot with music. No matter that his heart had already been elsewhere for quite a while, he finished his study as a building engineer. "We were taught to always finish what we started, stopping in between was not an issue. But I did not mind it. I just woke up late, not so much in a cognitive sense, but in the sense of general awareness."

During the period of his engineering study Jelle met his future wife, Ineke Ramaker. They married in 1977.

When Jelle got his diploma in 1975 he was 21 years old. He considered his next step, going to the conservatoire, for a long time, but hardly discussed it with his parents. "They were very bad in talking. This is something that made me good in talking with my own children, by the way.[1] I just announced it to my parents; they did not try to stop me, but they did not encourage me either. But I noticed though, without him saying it, that my father liked it; I would have the chance that he missed. They let me do my thing and I appreciated that."

Period at the conservatoire

In 1975 Jelle went to the Groningen Conservatoire. The flautist he had played with for many years, Leendert Runia, also went to the conservatoire. As a duo they had become quite famous in Leeuwarden in the meantime. "When I came to the conservatoire I was already a very good flautist. I played the Prokofiev Sonata,

which is one of the hardest pieces existing for flute. Musically it was all right, but my playing was wild and rash." Both boys got the same flute teacher, Peter van Munster.

Jelle found his period at the conservatoire enjoyable and hard at the same time: "I had to do things that *the establishment* demanded. At least for five years you had to obey that. Actually I was not very successful in that, I am too straight-lined and arrogant for that. With 'establishment' I mean that I was told things like: 'do you relax enough', 'vibrato has to be performed like this', 'your embouchure should…' or 'baroque music should be performed like this'. So if you were used to wearing jeans so to speak, you suddenly had to wear a dinner jacket. You had to do your tricks in the way classical music had to be performed in those days. To my mind I could not comply with it and that drove me crazy. I used to seem rather quiet and straight, but I also have a very nervous side. I now know that physically I am not blessed with my embouchure. In my lower lip I have a big vein. When I was nervous I could feel my heart beating in my sound. So the question of whether I was relaxed enough was not really helpful. I never realised that this was actually a serious problem. I thought I was not trying hard enough, so I got stuck. Only after my five years at the conservatoire did I find that I could play the flute well again. And that it was the pressure I could not deal with."

There was also another side. "I really loved the time at the conservatoire. I enjoyed the musical climate; not reading a single book, wonderful! But there was no place for my musicianship, which is my strong point and which fortunately I never lost. My musicianship is not intellectual, which does not mean that I avoid the theoretical and intellectual side of music, because without that you're lost, I know that. I am grateful that I learned this intellectual approach from Peter (van Munster, Jelle's flute teacher, RS), and playing baroque music from Wim ten Have[2]."

Teachers and important influences for his development as a flautist

Jelle mentions his flute teacher, Peter van Munster, as someone who was "incredibly important" for him, and who taught him a lot about performance practice. "But he did not know how to deal with my musicianship. He regarded it with a certain admiration, but also with an attitude of: 'I don't really know what to do with this'. The other two flute teachers in the conservatoire always said that I was blowing too hard, but I felt that it should not be the flute that determined my velocity, but my velocity that determined the flute! It was then that I decided that at some point I would develop another flute."

The fact that his flute teacher, due to physical problems, could not actually play himself, bothered Jelle. Nevertheless he never considered changing teachers. "The thought did not occur to me, and also my wife did not want to go to Amsterdam, so I never said anything, I always adapted. It would have been good for me to go to

Amsterdam though; there would have been a lot of challenges waiting for me there. On the other hand, in Amsterdam I would have been one of many."

Johan van der Meer was Jelle's theory teacher, who also taught Jelle a lot. This gave him the background to expand his composing, which he had tried to do for quite some time, but which, due to a lack of tools, had not been very successful.

Jelle did not find real examples or role models at the conservatoire. He found them however, in the United Kingdom, when, together with three fellow students[3] he visited a summer school in Canterbury in 1977, where flute masterclasses were given by the flautists William Bennett and Trevor Wye. "I will never forget Bennett and Wye entering and starting to play the flute. That was unequalled for us, Dutch. That sound, that musicianship, for me it was just *it*. Those ten days in Canterbury were enough to nurture me for the rest of my life."

Important influences in music absolutely existed for Jelle. First of course, there had been his father. Second, Lútzen Nijdam, his first teacher, was important for him as a teacher, though not so much as a flautist. "Rampal was also important for me, though I heard him only through the gramophone, and my second hero that way was James Galway. James Galway was also such a 'forbidden' flautist. But I simply loved his sound, and I recognised his musicianship, that was not bound to strict rules. And Bennet and Wye taught me a lot in terms of sound technique, they were the living example for me to legitimatise working with a file and soldering iron onto the mouth hole. I wanted a certain sound, but my flute stemming from 1915 did not permit it, so I rebuilt my flute! You should see William Bennet's embouchure hole: a hideous sight!"

The Groningen Flute Quartet

In 1976 the Groningen Flute Quartet was founded, consisting of four flute students, including Jelle. Amongst them were also Leendert Runia and Rineke Smilde, the author of this portrait. The very first piece they took to hand was a composition by Jelle. The flute quartet existed for ten years, even after the members graduated in Groningen, and they performed a lot. Jelle regards the quartet as very important for his development: "It was a kind of teacher for me, just like Peter was." Looking back, Jelle feels that he had a very difficult role in the quartet; "My sound preference was not shared. Leendert was very dominant, and so were you. I was not *yet* dominant, but I would never let things happen again like I let them happen then. If I am performing somewhere now, I perform the way I want to perform. I don't mean to say that the choices of the other members of the quartet were bad, they were right because their choices were the ones the establishment preached. They were the apostles of that approach, and it matched with their characters. It was quite an artistic fight. I liked this fighting; it did not make me feel pathetic or depressed."

Jelle enjoyed playing in the quartet tremendously as well: "I realise that no quartet can be found with four musicians like me. The challenge is to find a common denominator and I think we were quite successful in that. It was a fantastic experience, cosy as well, we had our little conflicts, but it was great to do it, thinking about our own role, although it was a fight all the way."

"I have always been a loner, but during the period at the conservatoire I really struggled to *belong* and at the same time to keep my own identity as a musician. I felt torn. Flute playing and committing to the establishment also meant: 'I want to belong to *this* group, not to some irksome youth society of the church'. I wanted to be part of a group of soul mates, only they did not tune in, except for the members of the quartet. I often felt the lesser one, especially during presentations. I felt that my musicianship was not recognized. My sound may have been a bit raw, but I know now that I am a very good musician, although I know that tempo is my weak point, once I let myself be driven by emotions."

Composition

Jelle graduated at the Groningen Conservatoire for flute in 1980. Meanwhile he had taken up another study, Composition, during the second year of his flute study. "As a child I always wanted to write down what I heard. I wrote down tunes from the television, listening to them every week. Later on I tried to compose something more modern, but I lacked the skills; it was not possible for me to write down what was in my head. Much music had been in my head for years already. But after I had some theory lessons at the conservatoire I wrote down music for the flute quartet, which we performed. I don't think it was a very good piece."

His teacher was the, at that time quit famous Dutch composer and conductor Willem Frederik Bon. "I think that Bon was badly in need of teaching hours, because I only sent this quartet and I was admitted for Composition, even without an entrance examination, isn't that odd?" Jelle studied composition until 1983, when he was awarded the Dutch Composition Prize.[4] In the last year of his study Bon fell ill with a brain tumour and died.

Jelle was not satisfied with his study: "Bon did not teach me very much. He spoke about conducting, about leading orchestras, or about an own composition he had to conduct that same evening. He would put the score on the table, we had to listen to a recording of it and then discuss his piece. Talking about music may have been interesting, but I was desperate for technical directions. I was always stuck vertically.[5] One time he gave me the assignment to compose a vertical piece and make variations on it, which became my woodwind quintet, but that was the only valuable indication I can remember. Bon was not a teacher; I did it on my own. I worked and worked, and he accepted everything. Now I can see where the mistakes were and I later got the feeling that he just was not too interested. I was not a pal to

him, like some of the other students. I am not very socially skilled, I did not go to the pub with him, or come to his house; other students would do that kind of thing, and they would talk to him and he would give them assignments. It feels to me that this was a disadvantage I had. It was not very motivating."

At present Jelle does not compose anymore. He finds it very demanding and feels that he did not get enough recognition as a composer to remain motivated to do it. "I miss it, but I do not want to compose only to end up on a book shelf, or for amateur orchestras. My idiom is not suited for amateurs or even accepted by them. Conductors tend to give up immediately, and that is so frustrating."

Jelle recounts of the orchestral piece that was to be performed by the Northern Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Lucas Vis.[6] Vis had just given a negative advice about the orchestra concerning a government foundation, resulting in cellists of the orchestra refusing to play Jelle's work. He also recounts of the piece he wrote for the Frysk Orchestra, making it not too modern for fear that, again, the musicians would refuse to perform it.

Flute construction

Jelle started repairing and making flutes immediately after he entered the conservatoire. This initiative was mainly born from dissatisfaction with the sound and volume of the average flute. "I remember the first flute I made, a piccolo, constructed of a small heating pipe. I made head joints and I filed them, and I made new pads. I made flat flutes, in order to improve the sound of the low notes. Those flutes were not very easy to handle in an ergonomic sense. I might have been able to find a solution for that, but the establishment rejected such flutes. I always play on my own flutes. The one I play at present has a good tube, but not a good head joint. I never really allowed myself a decent flute, which must have been just old fashioned Christian cheese-paring I suppose. It is ridiculous of course, but it may have to do with self-respect."

Teaching in the music school

Since his graduation Jelle has been holding a position as a flute teacher in the community music school 'De Wâldsang' in the village of Buitenpost, also in Frisia. For years he worked there as a full time teacher. In 1996 he took one day a week less, and at present he is slowly giving up teaching, in order to dedicate himself fully to flute manufacturing.

During the period Jelle had a full time job, he had up to 80 pupils. "I taught two or three pupils in a half hour. The flute was immensely popular in the eighties, and I got more and more colleagues as well. Things went really well, I enjoyed it. But slowly my enthusiasm diminished. When I was teaching I was always enthusiastic, especially when real musicianship was at stake. My enthusiasm could have been

infectious for the pupils, but that was not always the case. Too often it was not the case. At the moment itself all is well, the pupil leaves the classroom, and you expect him to go home with a loaded battery, enough to keep this enthusiasm at home. But then it turns out they don't pick up the flute at home at all. They just don't practise! My enthusiasm is like casting pearls before swine. In the worst of your midlife you think 'What am I doing wrong? I am a good teacher! I play with them all the time; I don't talk too much, I teach through my fingers, while playing the piano. That is music-making, and that should appeal to them'. Well, it does not appeal to too many of my pupils as it turns out. I might be arrogant, but it makes me think '*That* is not what I am doing this for! I feel too good for you lot!' I also have the feeling that the average educational level of pupils is declining. I have the best contact with intelligent pupils. That gives me a *kick*. I am not interested in whether I find my pupils sympathetic or not, as long as the information I give is not wasted."

Another issue is that Jelle does not feel challenged enough to be able to give what he has to offer. "I have a lot of things to offer for which there is no demand. Between my colleagues I often feel a 'one-eyed in the land of the blind'."

All in all Jelle has decided to gradually stop teaching: "I can easily do that because I have many orders for flutes, I can quite make a living of it, and maintain my family." Jelle is not worried about financial risks. There is only one risk, he thinks, which is becoming 'anti social': "A flute does not talk to you and no customer ever comes here. I send out everything by post." He finds quitting his job a natural step: "You cannot continue playing the flute for 40 years, and you cannot teach for 40 years either."

He does not have a feeling of failure, because he has an alternative. "I know how good the period at the music school has been. I recognize my own role in it. I just have the feeling that it is finished. I don't want to harp on about the pupils; they are exactly the same pupils as the pupils in the past, they only grow up in another society. Maybe I did not grow with them and maybe I should have grown with them. But in my lessons now I use CDs with that utterly obtuse music, or very good music that is used electronically. Sometimes my pupils find it too much trouble even to press 'play'. Or they lose their CDs. I can't bear that."
Jelle also recognizes that pupils often cannot deal with the stress of having to practise: "Flute playing is not like one mouse click on OK and consequently results are obtained."

"I have felt challenged, though sometimes not enough. I do believe that I have changed things. But now I don't see any possibilities for promotion in my job anymore. I absolutely would not want to be the director of a music school. Since I turned 45 I stopped doing certain things I used to do, such as giving courses, playing the flute, lecture recitals; I simply did not like it anymore."

Flute orchestra

An entrepreneur at heart, Jelle has initiated and performed many interesting projects in the music school, like opera projects, arrangements and potpourri's. In 1985 he started a flute orchestra and also wrote beautiful arrangements for it. Being driven by a desire for a real symphonic sound he started making instruments for the children in the orchestra, ranging from piccolo's to subcontrabass flutes, mainly using plastic pipes. The orchestra became very successful; it went on many tours and took part in competitions.

Jelle does not know if he wants to go on with the flute orchestra after he has stopped teaching: "It is repeating itself of course, not so much for the kids, but I hear myself saying the same things over and over again, and for me the concerts are not thrilling anymore. The children in the orchestra are enthusiastic and motivated though; they recognise my enthusiasm." Currently the orchestra has 35 members. His decision to continue with the orchestra depends on the new members; will there be enough newcomers and will they be enthusiastic enough? Will they be happy to work and not wait for an instant-result-happening? "I want it to be a challenge for both them and for myself. I also do it for my own musicianship, of course."

In 1988 Jelle started the flute orchestra 'Good Vibrations' consisting of professional players. "An initiative that emerged from my dissatisfaction with all the wrong notes and bad intonations in the other orchestra." But he got stuck, it was too much to organise, and the most shocking thing for him was that the professionals hardly played any better. Jelle got rid of the orchestra; a colleague took over.

Jelle feels the work with the orchestra is an ongoing issue in his development: "From the age of thirteen I have been playing with other musicians in a flute quartet and I am still doing it, through the orchestra. Making flutes and arranging is still the striving for that sound. And it is never finished."

The role of music

"The role music had in my adolescence has never recurred. The emotion I felt when I was listening to music or going to a concert with my father hardly ever came back. The period I spent at the conservatoire was so hectic and such a struggle; it did not give me the calm to really enjoy music. Ten years ago I made an arrangement of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto nr. 4. At that moment the music touched me again, after a long time. I like arranging, but it is a trade, I am driven of course, but emotion…? If I would put together a cupboard I would not be standing in front of that cupboard swallowing with emotion either, would I ?"

Lifelong learning

Jelle feels he has learned mostly because he practised daily from his twelfth year on,

for one and a half hours up to three hours a day. He feels that he is not especially technically skilled, but he learned by working hard. "I actually learn everything by memory. I play by memory, I am not a real good reader (of music, RS) and when I play the piano, I improvise more than I am playing the score."

Jelle does not know whether he is a lifelong learner: "What is learning? Have I learned a lot? I don't know. It starts with ambition, with the urge to do something. Technically I know exactly how I learn while playing the flute. When I practise a piece again after a long time, I feel the same issues emerging immediately that are critical to practice, like reading closely, repeating passages often and those kind of things. When I compose I have a vision of a piece, but never an image of a complete piece. It is a kind of first flash and I know which instruments I want to use. When I have written down the first page I know how long the piece will be. As a teacher I work and learn the same way: by improvisation. I don't like schedules and educational plans; I am messy and intuitive. Perhaps I feel that I do not learn enough from my pupils, otherwise I might not have decided to quit my job."

Learning to teach was not a topic that was very much developed at the conservatoire when Jelle was a student: "I didn't learn anything at the conservatoire in this respect. Nothing at all. It was ridiculous. But I became an excellent teacher, no problem. Have I learned? Normal people take a course when they want to learn, like some of those ladies who have to learn to lead an ensemble. You can't learn that, can you? You are able to do it or not!"

Jelle describes himself as a 'rhapsodic musician'. "I am an emotional type of musician, whose musicianship needs to be canalized through knowledge and intelligence. I have it both. In my adolescence I only had the first. The latter came during my studies, because I became a professional. It was hard to bring the two of them together, but I can do that now. I also know what I don't want. As a conductor I know exactly what I want. I have learned not to want to belong to something. Let the score speak for itself. It does not need to be perfect. It is more important to hear vulnerability."

Changes in the music profession

Jelle feels that the culture of classical music is not keeping pace with the change of modern times. "It is so boring. Who wants to be in that profession? Those frumpy young talent programmes on the television won't save classical music. That is not at all appealing to youngsters. This frumpiness is going to *cost* classical music listeners and I am long gone. I don't want to be in those circles anymore. I don't go to concerts; I don't play with those people anymore. Children I teach don't know who Vivaldi was. Their parents find an eight minute piece too long. Fortunately some people in classical music have really understood, like the members of the Netherlands Wind Ensemble, who work in a new refreshing way, which is festive, crazy, moving and new."

Jelle finds he cannot judge whether the content of the music profession has changed: "I am not a musician anymore." He thinks that conservatoires should stop educating classical music anyway, but offers no alternatives: "Pop music is anarchistic, pop musicians don't want any formal teachers. The thing is that people who *can* do it and are intelligent will find their own ways by themselves."

Looking back and to the future

Jelle does not regret the choices in his career: "I once worked for three months in a symphony orchestra and after that I was cured. It is very stupid work, especially as a second flautist. You have to do what the conductor says. I'd rather conduct myself. I am too much of a number in a group when I play in an orchestra. I do my things on my own".

He still reflects a lot about what happens in his teaching: "When I was a little boy I did not dare to say my name, which is remarkable for someone who is known as arrogant and self-confident. My self-esteem in my childhood was very low. Only after the period at the conservatoire did it get better. That marks my life. I think it grew because I have my own straight bottom line. I once tried to discuss things with my parents, when I was 35 years old. I just thought, 'Okay, we're grown up, the game is over, let's put the cards on the table'. That was totally impossible; they were shocked. What happened to me is very important in terms of my attitude towards my pupils. I have this feeling of 'I don't want this to happen to you'. I do not behave like a therapist, I watch out for that. But I do talk to them when I feel things; the boundary for me is the reaction of the child. 'May I touch your problem or not?' I think this is a holy task for teachers. Only one teacher in *my* life saw me, that was all. What I do now when I see something is bothering my pupil is actually saying: 'I *see* you, I appreciate you and that is the reason why I find it worthwhile to talk about it with you'. This is what I like most about my profession; the relationship with other human beings. At present I am preparing a girl for the conservatoire. She is full of fear of failure and this is holding her back all the time. I talk to her about it, 'you are talented but under pressure you cannot perform; you have to think about your feelings of failure and start enjoying your playing'. If someone like her wants to go to the conservatoire her personality has to be up to it. In the arts schools people can get very personal; one has to realise that."

"I might be a loner, but I am a very good father. I have few friendships, but I am not longing for more; people are often so narrow-minded. I know I am an intelligent guy; I don't want compulsory relationships with musicians who live in the past. I am now thinking things over. My wife taught me to talk. In the past I used to act less by thinking and more by intuition. In our family we talk with each other a lot, in order to prevent that you miss what is going on."

Jelle is satisfied about the flautist he is, and also about the results he sometimes

achieved with his pupils. He is less satisfied about his thinking about his own musicianship. "I think that you have to acknowledge yourself first, before you can accept a compliment from someone else. I am a very good flautist, except for my sound. And at critical moments, when I would get nervous, it became so terrible… So at first I started practising more and more. But that was not the solution. A few times I gave wonderful concerts, but then in the interval my thumb was blue because I had pressed my flute too hard. But I don't want to blame it all on physical matters, it was also nerves."

In physical matters Jelle went quite far: in order to improve his sound he even executed an operation on a fold in his upper lip a few years ago: "I discovered this fold was obstructing the air stream, forming a kind of little pyramid in my lip, so I burned it away with the soldering iron, using a glowing joint of copper, I work daily with that. Of course I wouldn't go to a hospital, why spend money on that? I don't permit myself that. Anyway, it helped. I will keep away from that vein in my lower lip, though."

A disturbance in his breathing apparatus is the result of working too much and too long in a badly ventilated shed and breathing in all kinds of poisonous fumes while making his flutes without wearing a mouth cap.

"My ambition has narrowed down to making flutes and I am satisfied with that, there is a lot left to discover and I get acknowledgement for what I do. I can be totally fascinated by the embouchure hole in the flute, for example. Once I played a C on a subcontrabass flute for nine days."

"I learned most of what I know by myself. I think of myself as a real autodidact, in everything. I do this by wanting, having ambitions, finding sources. Reflecting on my actions is something I only started doing at a later stage, when Peter (van Munster, RS) taught me about the relationships in compositions, by showing me that through analysis a performance gets an extra dimension, because then the structures reveal themselves. So I learned that the ultimate joy is a connection between cognitive and intuitive experience; that was a real eye opener for me. I also remember that in 1966 I was playing Händel with my father and he put a comma for articulation between two quavers in the music, I found that so extremely interesting. In England I learned a lot as well. As a flute maker I taught myself everything I know. Learning by doing, trial and error, go on developing, that is how it goes. Taking steps, adapt ergonomically, learning from practice. This is why my flutes are fundamentally different from others. Nobody can get me to take a course; I am way too cocky for that. Until someone proves otherwise, I know much better!"

Interview held February 23, 2006 in Haren

1 Jelle and Ineke have three children: daughter Geeske (born 1980), and sons Bart Jan (born 1983) and Maarten (born 1986).
2 Violist Wim ten Have taught chamber music at the Groningen Conservatoire.
3 Members of the Groningen Flute Quartet, described later.
4 At that time a student did not receive a diploma after finishing the study of Composition successfully, but instead was awarded the Dutch Composition Prize.
5 Here Jelle means being stuck harmonically, when looking vertically at the score.
6 Dutch conductor, who is specialized in modern music.

Floor Pots

Floor Pots was born in 1963 and trained as a music educator at the Groningen Conservatoire. She teaches at a secondary school in Groningen, the Werkman College, and also at the Prince Claus Conservatoire in Groningen in the department of classroom music teacher training. Floor is an active singer and conductor.

I have had to work hard to allow myself to be who I am. But I have always derived a lot from my work. I don't feel dependent on anybody in that.

Background

Born in 1963 in the village of Rolde in the Netherlands, Floor comes from a family that was engaged in the arts. Both her parents were educated as visual artists and worked in that field. Floor has a brother, Willem, who is five years older and who is a professional guitarist, and a sister, Anja, who is three years older and is a dance therapist. Floor feels it as more or less coincidental that she also has a profession in the arts: "I was not pushed at all into that direction."

Childhood and youth

Floor remembers her childhood as happy and uncomplicated until she was approximately twelve years old. The family lived at the edge of a forest, in a neighbourhood full of children, ideal for growing up in. She describes herself as a happy, though slightly withdrawn child. In Rolde Floor went to primary school, where she did well. She sang a lot, although there was not much music in the classroom, it depended on the interest of the teacher. But she took initiatives: "In the classroom it was always me who wanted to make little sketches and songs, for the teacher's birthday for example. I made texts and music, but music-making for me was only singing."

At the age of eight Floor got lessons at the music school in recorder and general music tuition, as most of the children of her age had. "I did not like it at all, and I didn't have a clue about the theory. After two years we had to do a test, and that went surprisingly well, I did everything by ear. But it was not exciting at all. After those two years there were some tests so they could give us advice about what instrument we could play. I wanted so much to play the flute, but the man who tested me told me that was impossible because he thought my hands would be too small. He asked me: 'Don't you have a piano at home?' Well, we had, so I said yes, I did not dare say no. So this man pushed me to the piano and I did not dare tell my parents that this was not my choice at all. So when I was ten years old I got piano lessons together with a little boy who was the teacher's favourite, and I just sat there

more or less for show. I played some piano, songs by ear for example, my own things, but I did not enjoy the lessons. I practised and I played at home. My teacher was called Liesbeth Meyer. In my memory she is a frail woman, not at all attractive or inspiring to me. We had to play from this Folk Dean method. I cannot remember that I discussed my disgust with my parents. I was a very obedient child. After two years I did not want to play the piano anymore, but I felt a bit sorry for the teacher, so I postponed saying it until it was totally clear that playing the piano was not my thing. I kept playing for myself though. I improvised and played songs of the Beatles or I made my own songs once in a while."

Parents' divorce

When Floor was thirteen years old her parents got divorced. "My father got a new job in the city of Groningen as a teacher in a higher education institution. It was a big change for us. He went to the city quite often and got a totally different kind of life. Then it turned out that not everything was as easy and innocent as it seemed." Despite the fact that the divorce did not come out of the blue, it was quite a shock for Floor, although she did not realise that at that time. "I withdrew, I was a real *person in hiding*, for years there were a lot of rows. Perhaps everyone has such a turning point in their childhood. Looking back I realised that I tried to make myself invisible at that time. I adapted to every situation, no matter how strange that situation was. It became a part of who I was. In the past five years of my life I have realised how formative it has been for me and only now have I found a way to deal with it." Floor continued to live with her mother in the same house in Rolde, and she also kept in contact with her father.

In 1975 Floor went to secondary school, to the Nassau College in the city of Assen, where her father had previously been a teacher. "That was an advantage for me, because I discovered that he had been very popular." At the Nassau College Floor went to the HAVO[1], which went well. She received her diploma in 1981.

After she stopped her piano lessons Floor didn't do anything about music for years, until her brother was given a violin by a former colleague of their father. "My brother was at the conservatoire, meanwhile, studying classical guitar. He didn't do anything with the violin, so at some point I took it from him. In the fifth grade of the HAVO I started to play the violin, I was sixteen years old by then. I took a few lessons from a student until, after graduation, I went abroad."

At secondary school the music lessons, when given, had not been too exciting except for the lessons of the teacher Peke Dijkema, who sadly left the school during Floor's first year. "Only in the third grade did we have music lessons for a short while, by a teacher from Surinam who called himself 'professor of Orff Sciences' and only told weird stories to us and made us listen to James Last occasionally. He left soon."

Period in Sweden…

Floor was not sure what she was going to do. Her dream had been to take up a profession in restoring. "I wanted to repair frescos in little old churches. Funnily enough I let go of that dream quite easily. You need a lot of knowledge about chemistry for that and I was not at all good at that. I had also been at the pre-selection for the theatre school but I found that that was not my thing either. I was more of a fine arts person. I had just started to play the violin so a career in that was not an option either."

In the end Floor decided to go to Sweden for a year. Her father, meanwhile, had a new partner who was Swedish. "Through her I had an easy and safe entrance, as I could go to a place where family of hers was living." Floor intended to go to an adult education centre. That did not work, and she did a lot of other things instead.

In September 1981 Floor went to Stockholm, where she stayed for six months and then to Kalmar in the southeast of Sweden. In both places she had all kinds of little jobs and she worked as an *au pair*. The au pair work was not much, being more a kind of window dressing in order to get a residence permit. "My stepmother's brother had a baby and I took care of it occasionally. I lived first with that family and later I had my own room. I had all kinds of jobs, I was a cook in a Kindergarten, I was a model for a painter, I washed windows. At some point I had a nice little network of people who knew that I could always use a little job."

In Sweden Floor got into contact with folk music and that would turn out to be quite a decisive event for her future career. "I landed in the scene of folk music and it excited me so much that I started playing the violin like crazy. There is a big tradition in folk music in Sweden and it was a way of music-making I had never encountered before. There is a whole network of minstrels who are all well informed about the music of their own region. Just playing along and making yourself aware of the tradition was wonderful and there was also music from the Balkans and Ireland that was being performed. We had a club and a club house where we came together to play. There was dancing going on as well. This way of making music, just learning by playing, not having to sit in lessons and practise studies, how it appealed to me! It was such an eye opener. Just come in, join the group and start somewhere. It was not judgemental at all, the only thing that counted was that you played along and joined the fun. But the result was that gradually I played better and better. That is to say, of course I had no idea of style in classical music yet."

…leading to a choice for a career as a music educator

Floor became so enthusiastic that she started to consider taking up the course in classroom music teacher training at a conservatoire, once she would be back in the Netherlands. At Christmas she was visited by her brother and sister in law, the latter was a professional musician as well, and put her plans forward to them.

"They laughed and said that I couldn't be serious, I had no theoretical background at all, did I even know what a seventh chord was? But once they discovered that I was dead serious they started to help me and taught me some things. After that I went to the music school in Kalmar and found a violin teacher who taught me to play a Vivaldi Concerto. It was a strange situation. This teacher kindly loaned me a beautiful violin of his own, because he regarded my violin as no better than a cigar box. I made this choice because I felt it would be an interesting study to take on. I am not the type to be engaged in practising the violin for six hours a day by myself. I love working with other people, and I found that out in Sweden. I felt intuitively that I was good at getting other people to play and sing. In the end I did an entrance examination in 1982 at the Groningen Conservatoire, playing this beautiful violin, with repertoire which consisted of one Vivaldi concerto and Swedish folk music. I think the jury felt my enthusiasm, I was admitted, brought the violin back to Sweden and started my study in classroom music teacher training in September."

Period at the conservatoire

The start was not easy. Floor would have preferred to have had a preparatory course, and she was actually quite surprised that she had been put in the first year. "My fellow students all had a much better theoretical background. I had no basis and things started on a level which was beyond my comprehension. It took me quite some time to work that out. I had a very bad violin teacher, who was not interested at all. Methodically it was disastrous and he gave me no regular lessons either. There were so few violinists in the classroom music teacher training department that at some point he refused to go to the conservatoire and I had to come to his house. There he would interrupt the lesson when the post was delivered. Some people in the higher years who studied with him failed their examinations. Meanwhile, I discovered that I preferred to sing, so I decided to stop taking risks with this guy. I took up singing as a principal subject."

In the first year Floor sang in a production consisting of a piece for choir and two guitars, *Dies Irae for Latin America*, composed by one of her teachers, Wim Dirriwachter. She loved it tremendously and this project stirred her lifelong love for singing. Things then changed for the better, because Floor got a wonderful singing teacher, Lenie Stappers. Lenie was inspiring and also paid attention to improvisation, which appealed to Floor a lot.

Floor liked her study. At the same time she felt that she was quite behind with many things, which made her feel uncomfortable. "Later I realised that I did not have a good idea about my own competences." But once she started to teach she felt that she had a really good grip on that.

Meanwhile Floor met the boyfriend with whom she would be together for ten years, André. He was a very good singer, and studied both classroom teaching and choir conducting and they started living together. "He was a theoretical genius. But

he couldn't teach, so that was *my* thing. He used to panic the evening before he had to teach a class, and then I would prepare his lessons for him." Floor did not find it easy to have a boyfriend who was so good in all the things she was behind with.

She worked hard. "In school they did not notice that I had a hard time coping. I did not bring it up, because I was too shy for that. I went on and on, and I think that my skills in ear training improved because I sang so much. André helped me with subjects like harmony and counterpoint."

Floor's principal study teachers were Wim Dirriwachter and Rob Smit. She found them both very inspiring and complementary, Wim being a thinker and Rob above all a practitioner. "'How will you keep them (your pupils, RS) out of the curtains?' was Rob's slogan. I admired them both tremendously. They were so skilled, so all-round, they both had done several studies in music."

Despite the fact that Floor felt inspired she finds what she learned at the conservatoire was far from what would become her daily practice. "I learned to write fugues, but what could I do in a classroom with that? I had to know how to make an arrangement! Piano lessons were interesting, but I should have learned how to accompany." The subjects were hardly interconnected. "So all in all I learned a tremendous amount of things that have been invaluable for my own personal development but not of so much use for my future profession in teaching. I have had to learn all those things in practice."

There was room for her own initiatives. "I was someone who was always enthusiastic to join in, and I was amazed about people who did not do that. We had subjects like percussion, 'sound and movement', all kinds of things. Our group of students was very inspiring. We sang a lot, formed a very good chamber choir, we made music for ourselves and other people. I felt really in place."

An 'ad hoc' learning environment

At the conservatoire there was a strict divide between students who were trained to be classroom music teachers and students who were trained to be performers/teachers on instruments. "There was some kind of severe hierarchy. At that time different instrumental teachers taught in both departments. The required level was of course lower for us. We were not allowed to play in the orchestra. I took it for granted, my whole life I had been used to adapt."

In addition there was, within the department of classroom music teacher training, a divide between a first degree and a second degree diploma, the first giving the graduate a qualification to teach in all secondary schools and the latter a qualification to teach only in the lower classes of secondary school. "In the second year the decision was made in what degree you would be allowed to graduate. That decision was solely dependent on marks. You had to have a minimum of a mark 7 for all subjects in order to do the first degree.[2] I had a 6 for ear training, so I had to do the second degree. That was absurd, nobody took your capacities into regard, your teaching skills or the age

category you would like to work with, or anything. And subsequently they forgot all about it, because in reality there was no divide at all. They only judged your examination less severe when you were a 'second degree student'. So the crazy thing was that I had to keep reminding my teachers myself. Humiliating things happened like the choir conducting teacher upgrading my final mark to a 9 instead of maintaining a lower mark, once he noticed that he had been mistaken in my degree."

Floor developed well during her study. In 1984 she joined in a theatre production as a choir singer, which took up a lot of her time. In the end she needed an extra year for her study. "I did not mind that at all. It was good for me to have this extra year. I got more and more engaged in theatre and I got really interested in this cutting edge between theatre and music." At that time she worked with the preparatory class of the theatre school, making music for the performances. Floor graduated in 1988.

Further professional development

Immediately after graduation Floor got a teaching job in a number of primary schools in the village of Beilen. "It kind of surprised me. Just before graduation I got a little job at an anthroposophy-based school, during the summer I had worked in Sweden, and immediately after my return I got this job. I had to jump into unknown waters. I knew nothing about primary schools. I had taken up my violin lessons and singing lessons and I had a lot of plans. I applied for jobs because we needed an income, my partner André was still studying, and of course I wanted to be financially independent."

Then Floor met the former head of the department of classroom music teacher training in the train. "She asked me why I hadn't actually done a first degree study. So I had to remind her *of all people* that she was the one who had forbidden that! But she said that she thought it would still be possible for me to do it. And that actually happened. I did it in the season 1989 – 1990. I worked very hard because meanwhile I had obtained a job at the Werkman College in Groningen as well, where I would also teach in the upper grades, so I needed this first degree. I had to do a lot of things in this year at the conservatoire, but strangely enough no music theory!" In 1990 Floor earned her first degree diploma. She continued working at the Werkman College.

Professional identity

"I realise that during my study I had a strange self image. My self-esteem was low. I did not see myself as a perfectionist, but others did. What other people saw in me I did not see in myself. I did not see myself as a future professional at all. I still find it difficult to see myself as a professional." Floor thinks that this has a connection with her escapist behaviour from the past: "making yourself invisible, not asking yourself too much. Only much later things came into perspective."

Floor has the feeling that she rolled into things. "Maybe that has to do with my self-image as well. I got wonderful jobs, but I never saw what was so special about me and why I was the right person to get them. I had an internship at the Werkman College and I came in without applying for the job. In 2002 I got a job at the Prince Claus Conservatoire."

Floor is multi-skilled but she finds that this also has another side: the threat of fragmentation. "After graduation I felt that I had learned just a little about a lot of things, but nothing much in a thorough way. Of course one has to build up a lot in practice, but I keep having this feeling."

She found out that she is quite capable of organising her own professional development. She has confidence in her own functioning as a teacher. "I have never felt unconfident about teaching. I can deal really well with groups and I feel fine with a class full of adolescents. I often have a feeling of *flow* while teaching, it goes really well. In other circumstances I can be very insecure, especially in the more intellectual area. I am a learner who goes from practice to theory, not the other way around. I feel challenged enough, because I feel where the gaps are. In my job at the conservatoire I came from practice, but the environment is quite intellectual there. I felt I had to learn a lot about it and I keep asking myself whether I am suitable for that. Do I have enough to offer as a teacher to future teachers? I haven't found the answer yet, I feel vulnerable about it."

In the Werkman College she feels confident: "I am enthusiastic, I know what it takes to be a good teacher. I play a sufficient number of instruments on a basic level to get children going. I can teach in an entertaining way, meaning that I can sell my stuff. I love teaching like telling a story. I have affinity with the age group I teach."

Conducting is something Floor has done a lot as well. "I am very good at making music with groups. For years I was a conductor of the homo choir *Zangzaad*. Often I felt, even before the rehearsal, that things would go well. Listening to what happens, responding to that, raising the level. That kind of experiences I also have in a classroom. Something is really happening then."

Floor does not characterise herself as a musician. "I don't think I am professional enough to regard myself as a musician."

Music is always around in Floor's life. "Nearly everything I do has to do with music, including my hobbies. I regard my singing and conducting as hobbies. We always make music at home. All my partners were musicians, and so is my current partner. I am also very interested in other arts, in visual arts and theatre in particular. For me it is a whole and music is central in it."

Relationship between life span and career span

Floor feels that some developments in her life and career are connected. "I had many crises and what is funny is that during all those crises my teaching has always remained a stable factor, the continuous line. Whatever I doubted, it was

never my motivation or skill for teaching."

Floor feels that André has been an important influence in her life. "The singing, the ancient music. For years we had an ensemble of ten people, the *Ensemble Josquin Desprez*, which he led and in which I sang. It continued after our relationship ended. It was a group of good singers and good friends as well. Musically it was an enormous learning experience."

After Floor and André's relationship came to an end she had two more relationships, which were quite problematic. Since five years Floor has had a partner, Fons, with whom she is very happy and quite at ease. He is a colleague of hers at the Werkman College. Floor already knew him for quite a while before they got together. "Our relationship developed very gradually. He lost his wife and quite soon after she died our relationship began. I knew her very well, and things went quite natural." Fons is very influential for Floor: "He keeps challenging me, which is good for me and which gives me confidence."

Six years ago Floor landed in a big crisis. "My relationship ended, but I had an enormous drive not to go down because of it. For years and years I had only done the things other people asked me to do until I reached my limit. I wanted to come to terms with my past. I had an enormous amount of adrenaline and energy. I found a therapist, which worked out well and which really helped. I wrote a lot to get a grip on things. Actually it was very special. You never know how you will act in a crisis. I realised that I could deal with it. I was happy to notice that I had so much energy. Perhaps you can only face the truth in its real dimension when things have gone deeply wrong. I have had to work hard to allow myself to be who I am. But I have always derived a lot from my work. I don't feel dependent on anybody in that." Floor had to come to terms with her childhood as well. She looks back on her youth with mildness.

Just after Floor started her work at the conservatoire she got severe health problems. It appeared she had a big endometriosis cyst. After it was removed she continued to suffer for two years and in the end her womb and ovaries had to be removed as well. She could not have children anymore by that time. "I was nearly forty but I found out that from my thirtieth year on I could not have had children." Floor can live with it: "although of course there are moments when I think, why me?" She is not willing to let her life be determined by it. "I am very satisfied with my life as it is, but of course I would have loved to know what child I would have had."

Learning experiences

Floor feels she learns much through the examples she gets, less by reading or other forms of formal education. "I feel inspired by people who have something to tell from their practice, I have often been disappointed in formal continuing education

courses. I learn by trying things, or by suddenly getting ideas through associations. I think that is part of *flow*. Paradoxically I can learn by being badly prepared, then I make what you can call 'emergency jumps' that can turn out to be very useful. So perhaps, without realising it, I think I have developed quite a toolkit."

Floor feels she has a way of teaching that is very much based on interaction. "Of course I am the guiding person but the contribution of the pupils can be quite influential and that leads to things I learn from. The same goes for the students I have at the conservatoire. There are moments of doubt, where I wonder whether I have enough to offer the conservatoire students. I need to learn to combine practice and intellectual background. I am not quite ready to do that."

Sometimes Floor is confronted with situations that are difficult to handle, like when she had to face serious problems of children, as a mentor. "I was told by the management of the school to use my intuition, but it was difficult." Another example are the big changes that have taken place in arts education in secondary schools. "I dealt with it by reading and reflecting. This job at the conservatoire is a new challenge for me. I am working in the interfaculty of arts education, I develop modules in entrepreneurship and so on. And I keep thinking: do I have enough to offer? I don't think that will ever really pass."

Skills required

A lot of skills are required to function well as a contemporary music educator. Many of them Floor has had to acquire after graduation, like the accompaniment mentioned earlier, basically playing the guitar and the bass guitar. "Those are things I use daily in the classroom and which I did not learn. Mentoring is another example, I only learned it in practice and it is a critical skill for a good teacher. Other skills I needed to improve were preparation lessons, making music with your class and, for example, organising. I tell my students at the conservatoire what I discovered and what I think is important to know. I try to transfer my own learning process to them."

Future aims

Floor wants to reach a good balance between her teaching responsibilities in both schools, which allows her enough time and space for her personal development. "I have discovered that having two part-time jobs is more than one full-time job and I feel that I have to deal with that." Important for her is also that she can make real choices and by that cease to lead a professional life which is too fragmented. "I want to direct myself in the pathway I want to take. And I have to realise that I can demand that for myself."

Changes

Floor finds that all tendencies she sees in society are reflected in the secondary

school. She feels it has become more difficult to teach. "I see more children with problems, also problems caused by the fact that some children get a lot of attention and are thus hard to trigger. The school takes over quite a few educational tasks of the parents. You see parents who have a big role in society, spoil their children and actually neglect them at the same time. Sometimes I feel that I have a class full of negotiators, but not everything in life can be negotiated. It is a big difference to how things were fifteen years ago."

The changes are fast paced and political demands on education, including arts education, are numerous. Floor feels that teachers don't get the time and opportunity to reflect on what needs to be developed, which is a bad situation.

But she holds on, confidently and lovingly: "The stubbornness of puberty attracts me; suddenly they can become interested in something. I love to achieve something with a difficult class which is worthwhile."

Interview held May 16, 2006 in Groningen

1 Higher general secondary school, lasting five years.
2 In the Netherlands marks range from 1-10 .

Dicky Boeke

Born in a musical family in Den Bosch, Dicky Boeke is an extraordinarily active woman, who, at nearly 82, is still active in her profession of music pedagogue. She studied at the Amsterdam Conservatoire between 1939 and 1947; piano with George van Renesse and cello with Piet Lentz and developed into a remarkable pedagogue. She married Filip Boeke in 1949 and started her career as a cello and piano pedagogue, which was very successful and has lasted until today. From 1956 onwards she studied singing with the famous pedagogue Annie Hermes for seven years. After this period she started teaching singing as well. Dicky and Filip had three children, their son Kees was born in 1950 and is a professional recorder player, living in Italy; their daughter Liesbeth, born in 1952 works as a dance teacher and lives in Milan. Their youngest daughter Yond was born in 1956 and works as a translator of Italian literature in Amsterdam. Over the many years of teaching Dicky developed her own method, encompassing a unique combination of connecting experiences in the different instruments she taught.

In my career I feel deeply satisfied because I was able to take my pupils by the hand, and enable them to arrive where they wanted to be.

Childhood

Dicky Boeke was born as Dicky Brans on April 28, 1924 in Den Bosch, in the south of the Netherlands. She had a twin sister, called Jacky, who died two years ago, and an older sister, Trees. Dicky's mother was a lawyer; her father an expert in Dutch and also an historian who taught first at a secondary school in Den Bosch and later at a grammar school in The Hague. In the latter school he led the school orchestra, which performed twice a year. He also wrote reviews of concerts in newspapers.

Music was central in Dicky's parental home; her mother played the piano, her father played the violin. Dicky describes her mother as 'very intelligent and very interested.' "When she played the piano nothing ever went wrong. Nevertheless I did not find her so gifted in music."

Dicky cannot say whether she had a strong relationship with her sisters: "It was normal, I suppose. I was mainly busy with music." She looks back at her youth with mixed feelings: "It was wonderful in the sense that we were allowed to learn whatever we wanted and that music at home was fantastic. But the other side was that my parents did not get along, there were a lot of quarrels. I still can't bear rows. I had a very good relationship with my father, especially because of the music, and with my mother as well. But their rows… I told myself that I in the future would never argue with my husband in the presence of the children. It is terrible."

Dicky started to play the piano when she was seven years old; she got lessons at the music school of Den Bosch, with Mr. Callenbach, the director. "It was quite something to have lessons with Mr. Callenbach; you were only admitted to his lessons when you could read notes and when you could write a melodic and rhythmic exercise."

Her father played weekly in an amateur string quartet. Dicky used to listen to the rehearsals, quietly sitting on the staircase and fell in love with the sound of the cello. "I told my parents I would absolutely love to play the cello, but physically I was still too small, my hands were too small as well. Little cellos as they exist now did not exist then. I had to wait a long time. In the end I was twelve when I could finally start."

Dicky went to primary school 'with the nuns'. The family was catholic. Her father regularly went to church and the girls were allowed to make up their minds themselves whether they would go. During the time at primary school life was all about music. In the sixth grade, aged 11, Dicky had already decided that she wanted to go to the conservatoire. And, "at the age of twelve I finally got my cello lessons, I don't remember the name of my teacher. He came from Utrecht to our house in Den Bosch; you could not have cello lessons at the music school. I liked the cello lessons very much, every week I had practised a new study."

The family now had its own string quartet; Dicky has happy memories of her two sisters playing the violin, her father the viola and she herself the cello. She performed a lot as a child, on the cello as well as on the piano, and she liked it tremendously. Her big dream for the future was to sit on a stage. "I am now too old to perform very well. But I could play beautifully and magically. I found it fun, agreeable, simple, nothing special, it just felt great."

The idea of starting a study in music the sooner the better became more and more attractive for Dicky, and she started negotiating with her father not to have to go to secondary school. In the end he promised that she would be allowed to stop secondary school after she would have succeeded to accomplish her first year, and being a historian of course, he gave her some additional tasks to perform in history. Dicky regards her father as influential for her musical development.

A young student in the conservatoire

In 1939, being fifteen years old, Dicky did an entrance examination for piano at the Amsterdam Conservatoire and she was admitted. Cello became her secondary study. She was fascinated by both instruments, but chose the piano as a principal study, because she had only started to play the cello three years earlier. "For me the only important thing was to have good cello lessons as well." She started to study

piano with George van Renesse and cello with Piet Lentz. Being still very young, she continued to live at home and commuted from Den Bosch to Amsterdam.

"The lessons with Van Renesse were very special, in the first place concerning interpretation. His performance woke a lot in me. He had a kind of sensitivity in his playing, I never heard it again, like velvet. When he played I got an overview of music. He seduced me at a certain moment and we then had a love affair, but that was apparently a woman's fate, being a student of his. Strangely enough the lessons were fantastic, despite all misery."

Looking back, Dicky finds it hard to make a judgement about what kind of teacher he was. "He was egocentric, he was a *womanizer*, I had a relationship with that man, starting when I was 16 years old. Coming from Den Bosch, he scheduled me at the end of the afternoon, as his last student of that day. The funny thing is that upon my entrance examination it was announced that I could not study with him, because he had no room for new students. However, after he had heard me play, he took me as a student. My fingers were fast, he was jealous of the velocity of my trills. I learned a lot from him, especially in the field of interpretation of Debussy and Ravel. He did not pay any attention to technique but fortunately that did not cause any problems. I had and still have strong fingers. I loved making music. On the other hand I hated having lessons with him, especially when we had this love affair as well. That should not happen. In the end he was dismissed because of many of these things. And believe it or not, my cello teacher was as well, for the same kind of things. When my relationship with Van Renesse was over and I told Lentz, he offered to comfort me. Terrible. All *his* business even went to court. I refused to be a witness, I did not want to commit perjury for him."

Dicky's cello teacher was a good pedagogue, she finds. "He taught in a very structured way, I liked that, I got a 10[1] for my cello examination and was allowed to continue my lessons. I then went on with chamber music for a while."

She finds it difficult to judge the influence of her teachers on her motivation. "The lessons had their quality of course. I had my own opinion and I did not hide that. My teachers were of course not what you would call role models. What they have done is incredible isn't it? On the other hand I suppose it is not something special, I think it happens a lot."

By 1940 the Second World War had started, which often made it difficult to travel. On those occasions Dicky would stay with a family in Amsterdam, and later on she would live for two years in a student room in Amsterdam.

The liberation came for a part of the Netherlands in 1944, for the other part of the country the hardest part of the Second World War had arrived. "In 1944 the south of the Netherlands was freed from hell. Because Amsterdam had yet not been liberated my father would not allow me to stay there, it was very dangerous.

Bridges were blown up, there was no food. I just could not be there. So at the age of 20 I was again at home and I started to teach in Den Bosch, at the music school. I taught the piano and the cello. People could not cross the big rivers at that time, so some teachers could not come to the music school and I replaced them. I liked teaching, but I have no idea if I did it well. I had not learned anything about teaching at the conservatoire, the education was a big nonsense in that sense; the most they did was make us read a book about teaching, that was all."

After the liberation Dicky started studying again in Amsterdam in 1946 and in 1947 she earned her diploma for piano. Meanwhile the family had moved in 1945 to The Hague, where Dicky's father was appointed as a teacher at a grammar school, Dicky's older sister went with them as well; her twin sister meanwhile had left home and lived in Limburg.

After graduation

After Dicky graduated she did not take up a job in music, but she stayed in The Hague and started to work with her father, "I did lots of things for him, like archiving literature and music." Then she became depressed. "I think it is quite exceptional that all these things I went through had not blocked my study; that I remained motivated, and at the same time I disapprove of it deeply. It made me very nervous and after I had finished my study I got heavy migraines for a period of four years. Fortunately I got help from a therapist, who made a connection between what had happened, my depression and this migraine. I could not easily talk about it. But he helped me very well and my migraine went away." Her father had reacted very understandingly when she told him about what had happened and supported her.

Starting in the profession – developing a pedagogical career

In 1948 Dicky started to teach. In 1944 she had met Filip Boeke, her future husband, during a party ("I found him so attractive!") and they got married in 1949. Filip was at that time solo oboist in the orchestra of the Netherlands Opera. The couple settled in Amsterdam, in a basement on the Amstel river. The marriage is still a happy one. "It was fantastic, I had stopped working for my father, Filip and I started to sing in the *Amsterdam Chamber Choir*, conducted by Jan Boeke.[2] After nine months we became parents of our son Kees. Exactly nine months! I am sure my old aunts were counting!"

In order to have better possibilities to maintain his family, his salary at the opera being very low, Filip then decided to read Psychology. In 1952 their daughter Liesbeth was born. It was a great time, Dicky feels: "It was always open house with us." While Filip was busy graduating Dicky taught more and more in order to have an income for the family. She taught the cello as well as the piano. "I did not know much of teaching, but I had meanwhile started to develop a method for piano."

Dicky's method

"I developed my own method for both the piano and the cello. I did this by asking myself questions and by writing down everything that came to my mind, wherever I was. I would always carry a little notebook with me. In the end I would work 15 years on it; actually I still work on it. When I became 60 my son Kees said to me: 'why wouldn't you publish it?' but I did not want to. I wrote everything down, it is very old and very personal, full of references and brain waves and things I crossed out again. It would cost me so much time to sort it all out; a student of mine offered to help me, but I did not want to. Maybe that was not wise of me, but I found it too complicated.

The method contains all kinds of questions being addressed, not only in a general sense, but also in detail. I wrote about motives for example, about heavy and light beats in the bar. You really have to know about baroque music and classical music, because you have to explain that to both children and adults, it can't be done by sheer feeling. I also write about accentuation and explain the issue of resonance. Especially children remember those things very well. I wrote it down in such a way that you could hear things immediately. I wrote endlessly. About interpretation and technique, about musical construction, it needed to be described, but it cost a lot of time.

Several issues of the method, like interpretation and physical aspects, go for both the piano and the cello. My method developed step by step. I could write very well, but now not any more. Obviously things were already developing in my head when I started to write them down. Now I sometimes read back things and then I realise: 'that is true, you can't be able to get round.' "

Coaching her pupils musically is also part of her method. Dicky always connects musical development with technical development. "I can try to raise musical awareness by the bow, by the technique, so that my pupils listen to themselves and hear themselves 'beautifully'. It has a lot to do with interpretation and somehow with the *touché* of George van Renesse."

Another means of making pupils aware of matters of interpretation is improvising. Dicky finds improvisation utterly important, and this goes for pianists, singers and cellists alike. "I do it for example through the Dorian or Lydian scales, which then serve as a harmonic and melodic foundation. Bartók is a great example there. Improvisation is something that has to be done by all pupils. We will then see what happens. If you get confidence in improvising, you get more confidence as a performer, rhythmically as well."

For the cello Dicky developed the *rotating method*, simple but effective, leading to a relaxed way of playing by using the guidance by the upper arm; "it is a cunning method, very important. It is of no use to explain anatomical things to pupils. It is important that they *feel* and *experience* things."

Moving to Santpoort and a new step: singing

In 1955 the family moved to Santpoort, near Haarlem, where Filip started to practice as a psychotherapist. Here in 1956 a third child was born, their daughter Yond. Also in Santpoort Dicky continued to teach both the cello and the piano. A flourishing practice would develop. She taught mainly at home, and one morning a week in Haarlem. She practised herself a lot as well, both on cello and piano. The family would remain in Santpoort until Filip's retirement, Dicky and Filip then went to live in Amsterdam, where at present they still live.

In the same year when her third child was born, Dicky took up singing lessons. She had a high coloratura[3] soprano. The reason why she took it up was simple: singing in the *Amsterdam Chamber Choir,* she wanted to train and develop her voice. Dicky took private lessons with the famous Dutch pedagogue Annie Hermes, and she loved it. "It was perfect, in a mental, musical and technical sense. Really everything as it should ideally be. Annie was without any hesitation a role model for me. Anyone who gets lessons like that is extremely blessed. We always prepared a quarter of an hour, mentally and physically, a warming up so to speak. I liked this idea of a warming up, I took it over in my cello and piano lessons, and everybody liked it!"

Dicky would study for seven years with Annie Hermes, and after she finished she also started to give singing lessons. "I use expressions that you will never find in a book. My pupils tell me that, and it appeals to them. I just have to do it, the way you serve the food makes your meal! For example when I say 'the cathedral continues to sing', they will know what I mean, because the cathedral is your oral cavity. When you take a deep low breath your nostrils widen, your oral cavity feels like a cathedral. You have to feel that in yourself, also when you recite a text. I say to my pupils: 'it is in your head and not in mine. If you do that well, you will catch your audience; you will catch me.' That is why I say, 'think of the cathedral; find your resonance in yourself!'"

Lifelong learner

It is clear that Dicky developed all her systems herself, her method for piano, cello and later, guided by Annie Hermes, singing. "Don't think I learned that in the conservatoire! I did not learn a damn thing in this field at the conservatoire."

Dicky stresses the importance of the fact that no pupil is the same. "I deal with that on intuition. I will not easily add water to the wine. But you must have feeling for it and make sure that you always make your pupil feel confident. Enjoying and feeling confident is always number one, whether you are a professional or not."

The more Dicky gains results with her pupils the more she feels drive, also technically. "By intuition I built up everything slowly, I had no idea how to go about it." Dicky has always taught children and adults as well as professional musicians who come for advice. She likes it and has no preferences. Professional

musicians who come to her for advice are meant to accept criticism. "I always ask them whether they can face the truth. If yes, you can tell them everything. I listen, I criticize, I interrupt them if necessary."

Dicky is a lifelong practitioner. "The only time that I practised less was when my children were small. When they were small my practice was limited and I had domestic help. The children learned that they were not to disturb me when I was teaching. I used to start in the afternoon. When they came from school I would have tea together with them and the pupil that was present at that time. I always did it like that. In the evenings I sometimes taught, one evening was for singing lessons. I also coached ensembles. I still do. And I practised of course."

As a teacher Dicky typifies herself as 'strict, but also nice and humorous.' She considers that three crucial characteristics for a good teacher. As a musician she feels she is a perfectionist. "But this goes for teaching as well; how far can you go being perfectionist? You must find a balance for the motivation of your pupils. You can ask more of some pupils than of others, also physically. It is very important for a teacher to realise that, especially when your pupil wants to go into the profession. The profession is sometimes underestimated. It is hard, and connected to a lot of things, like character, patience and being inquisitive." Teaching is hard work, Dicky feels. "A lesson of one hour is not much. The essence must be touched. You must make sure that what you want to play you *can* play, with a good clean technique. As soon as I hear a mediocre soloist I immediately know why that is."

Dicky cannot easily mention important influences for herself: "Later in my life in my busy practice and with the children I did not have the time to get to know new pedagogues." But her husband Filip has always been an important sounding board for her, "we talk endlessly about music, we are terribly critical, but it's great fun." She mentions also her son Kees, living in Italy and currently professor of recorder in Zürich and Trossingen, as someone who is influential for her. Dicky goes to many live concerts and operas, which she considers of great importance. And: "I think I am mainly influencing myself."

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurial skills cannot be denied to her. Dicky always got her students in through her network; she never had to be active to get students. She was, together with Filip, closely involved in the creation of the new broadcasting company Concertzender[4] starting twenty years ago. "Filip and I made registrations of young talented musicians. Those were long days. I was looking for musicians who were talented, and who deserved a chance." Dicky remained active for the Concertzender for many years.

She also organised for a long time chamber music concerts in the Noorderkerk, in the centre of Amsterdam. The series became very successful. She finds it normal to be so active: "Why would I do it? Well because I am mad about music of course!"

The role of music
"Music is… everything. Isn't it? Music is totally central, both in my professional and social life. That is not to say that there are no other things that interest me. I go a lot to exhibitions and I love to read."

Changes needed in the teaching profession
Dicky feels that students are not trained well enough in conservatoires to become good teachers. She fears that method, discipline, interest and liveliness might lack too much in this field. "It shows in some music schools. I visited a concert of pupils in a music school a while ago, and I was shocked, seeing how these children used their bows, about their posture, the lousy instruments they had, the inanity. I just hate it. I am convinced that things must change. And the very first thing that needs to be changed is the idea of 'I will become a teacher *just because* I am not good enough to sit on the stage.' I don't want anything to have to do with that. A teacher needs to have excellent ears and to be really gifted. I am also very weary of all this pushing of young talents nowadays. Why not have them develop in peace and quiet? In exceptional cases I can have understanding for it but in general I do not approve of that approach. I think that those children should develop peacefully while enjoying life. Music is not an abstract thing, it is very physical, and it is connected to everything, life experiences being the most important of all."

An example of the work with a young talented child
Pieter Wispelwey is an extremely accomplished Dutch cellist, who has an international career as a soloist. Dicky has taught him from the very beginning, and he still asks for her advice. "He was six years old when he came. I had just reduced my practice in Santpoort significantly, because it was too much. He came with his father, I looked at the little boy and I saw that he had 'cello hands', I could see that immediately. That is not to say that I will not gladly teach someone who has *no* cello hands, by the way! The boy was very motivated; his father played in a string quartet and he was listening to it while sitting under the grand piano. From the very beginning it went well and enjoyable. It is like an oasis to have a pupil who comes in weekly having practised a Dotzauer study which he plays by memory without any problem. For a teacher that is a gift, and it is your duty to perform your task as excellently as possible. The strings, the bow, physically, technically, we worked very hard. He went to grammar school meanwhile and all in all we worked for twelve years. We had a great time, never any difficulties. I did not push him on the stage during his development. He did play of course during the performances at our house. I just observed how things were developing. He wanted to go to grammar school himself; otherwise things might have gone differently. He is quick and technically gifted. Musically and physically he is extremely gifted, and he is virtuosic, but not a super virtuoso. *That* emerges, or not. I trained him according to

my method. That is how he plays. He still comes to me, to play for me and hear my opinion. He has just got a new Italian cello and asked me to give him tough criticism, if necessary. He wants to have a sparring partner. 'Dicky, do you have a minute?' 'Sure.' Next moment it is one and a half hour later. Our relationship, our pedagogical tie is already 37 years old. That is fun. That is the way it should be."

Looking back at her career

Dicky regrets that she has not learned any languages, because she quit secondary school. But on the other hand she has never regretted going to the conservatoire at a young age. She feels that there were holes in her conservatoire education. "When you are studying in a conservatoire the education should strengthen your love for different things in music, musically and intellectually, so that you keep it with you for the rest of your life. I was well taught as a pianist and as a cellist, but I was not taught to teach. If I would not have dealt with that so well myself, I would not have had a career. The education at the conservatoire was only aiming at artistic development and teaching was regarded as a second rate profession, I often have the feeling that this is still the case. That has to stop."

She challenges her pupils and it has never caused any problems. "The funny thing is that my pupils, both children and adults, never were bored, although of course they all are very different. They are ever so loyal; they never went away!"

Since one and a half years Dicky has suffered from arthritis. She often has a lot of pain. "It depresses me in fact, but I do not give myself permission to be depressed. I get out of my life whatever I can get out of it. I am blessed with a good health."

There is one thing Dicky deeply regrets: "When I became 65 I decided to continue my practice. Filip was pensioned and I continued to work, because in the spring we always used to go for three months to France, where we have a house. Last year we could not go to France, because of my health and that depressed me. I considered myself rather egoistic that I had not stopped earlier. I asked myself why I had not stopped when I was seventy. I could not guess that this would happen. I only cut back my lessons when I became eighty."

"I don't know if there is a relationship between my marriage and how my career developed, nor do I know if without Filip I would have had a career in music. One thing is for sure: the children have been crucial. I really wanted them, and that has determined my choices. I loved to have my children and we were good parents: strict *and* cheerful. I never found anything too much, only later I realised how much energy everything always cost. My life with Filip and the children has satisfied me deeply, and in my career I feel deeply satisfied because I was able to take my pupils by the hand, and enable them to arrive where they wanted to be. I am ever so pleased that I succeeded in that. And still I have three pupils, I cut back my lessons,

but I kept the three pupils who didn't want to leave and whom I didn't want to miss."

Interview held March 14, 2006 in Amsterdam

1 In the Netherlands the highest mark.
2 Choir leader, Filip's cousin.
3 A high female voice which can be used very flexible and virtuosic in the top notes.
4 For classical music and manned by volunteers.

Anneke Schilt

Violin pedagogue Anneke Schilt, née Plate, has played an important role in the Netherlands in the development of a pedagogy for teaching the violin to very young children. She studied at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague with the violinist Joachim Röntgen, where she graduated in 1966. From 1972 onwards she has been teaching the violin at the Community Music School of Amstelveen and developed over the years a rich culture of teaching the violin, chamber music and orchestral playing. Anneke Schilt is regarded as a pioneer in the Netherlands in group tuition of young children. She wrote a method for young violinists, 'Aanloopje' ('a running jump for beginners'), which was published for the first time in 1993. She also gives courses on teaching (very) young children. Many of her former pupils became high-level professional musicians.

So what is my aim? It is to guide the children as far as possible, in such a way that they can enjoy their music-making for the rest of their lives. Whether that is for the profession or not, is not important.

Early childhood, full of creativity and longing for a violin

"I was born in my grandfather's private hospital in Utrecht, a beautiful *Jugendstil* building. He was an internist, treated patients there, and he lived there as well. I remember as a child being there year after year to celebrate Christmas and then we used to be woken up at six o'clock in the morning by the chant of the nurses. All doors would be opened, so that the patients could listen, you heard the songs through the whole building. It was so beautiful. In the afternoon the grandchildren would perform a Christmas play for the patients. The patients were brought in their beds together in a big hall and we would perform for them. My mother would rehearse it with us, with my being Mary. It impressed me deeply. I think that for me my future choices started to be made during those moments."

Anneke Schilt was born in 1942, during the Second World War. She did not know her father until she was three years old; in January 1942 he had fled abroad, was captured by the Germans and returned only three years later.

Anneke lived with her parents and two older brothers in Voorburg. She was a child full of fantasy and creativity, from early childhood being crazy about music, theatre and ballet. Her father was an engineer and her mother a lawyer, both having their own career. The two brothers were six and four years older. Anneke's father played the flute, and her mother the piano. The two brothers played piano and hobo.

Primary school, being a Montessori school[1], was a great source of creative delight for the young girl: "there was a lot of music in the school. We had professional

music teachers, one of them played the piano very well, and there was a lot of singing going on in the school. Together we sang in a big classroom. We even did three and four-part songs." A lot of activities took place, not only in music, but also in dance and theatre. Even in Kindergarten preceding primary school this was already the case.

At the age of six Anneke got piano lessons. Due to bad teaching, it was not a great success. "My teacher also wrote reviews of concerts for a newspaper, so often he had to go to concerts in the evenings and had to deal with deadlines during the night. During the day he went on his bicycle visiting his pupils. He always taught me during lunchtime, ate his lunch during my lesson and after that I always saw him dozing off, not registering the fact that sometimes I played ten times the same lines." Anneke loved to improvise at the piano, sorting out her musical thoughts, more than doing exactly what was written. Her mother tended to regard that as 'messing about', and used to make remarks about it. Her teacher nevertheless helped Anneke to learn how to write down her own ideas. Looking back Anneke feels that it was worthwhile for her to start and learn the piano at an early age; improvising and harmonising became very helpful when later in her life she started teaching.

"My other grandfather played the violin, and when he played we all had to be silent in order not to disturb him. I was very impressed by his playing. At his funeral, I was then five years old, there was a man playing the violin beautifully, so that set me off to want to play the violin. It did not leave me. When someone came to our house after my grandfather's death to try out his violin, I fell in love with the sound. I remember that this man held his eyes closed while playing. The sound of the violin did it for me, it still does. I also remember that in primary school a little boy went visiting the classes playing for us on his violin. It made me jealous: 'he can play the violin and I am not allowed to do it.' But I had my piano lessons, and my parents did not want me to start violin lessons as well; they decided that I could not start playing the violin until I had mastered the piano 'properly'. I kept on at them endlessly about the violin lessons, and it took a long time before I was finally allowed to take it up."

Anneke also felt inspired by a beautiful book called *Sijtje*[2] about a farm girl who lived in a little village and got a violin. She kept rereading this book.

Meanwhile, as a young child, Anneke did a lot of ballet as well: "with little girl friends I started the 'Voorburg Ballet', and we used to give presentations at our homes. We had ballet lessons, and sometimes the ballet school organised presentations as well, but for us that was not enough. We wanted it to happen weekly, so we made our own performances, using an old gramophone player and designing our own choreographies. We did *Swanlake*, *Les Sylphides*, whatever, and

we changed our names into French names, because of course we found our own names too common. We were very fanatical."

Nevertheless the violin remained totally compelling. "My parents were told that it was a difficult instrument to play, the 'messing about' on the piano was still an issue as well. And there was of course also the subject of money, and, just after the war, that was something I understood really well."

At the age of thirteen, after years of waiting, Anneke was finally allowed to have violin lessons. Meanwhile she had stopped her piano lessons, later she would pick it up again. The age of thirteen is a relatively late age to start playing the violin, something that has bothered Anneke in her motor development. "Right now I would hesitate to advise someone of twelve years old to start playing the violin. It makes it much harder to reach a high level. My parents had no clue about that. In my family you were supposed to go to University. To go to Utrecht and read Law. I think I have been the very first grandchild of my grandparents who did not do that."

Period of adolescence, having the violin as a friend

When Anneke was twelve years old she went to the grammar school[3], part of the Montessori Lyceum in The Hague. She was in the second grade when she started to play the violin. She got violin lessons at a music school in The Hague that was connected to the Royal Conservatoire, serving as a preparatory school. Her teacher was Paulien Zondag, a student of Joachim Röntgen, Anneke's future violin teacher. Her development went extremely well and fast, no doubt also due to the fact that she already had well developed aural skills. After six lessons she already played in a presentation.

Anneke liked her lessons with Ms. Zondag: "She was a kind-hearted person, and I was very motivated, so we got along very well." After half a year of lessons with Paulien Zondag, Anneke started having lessons with Joachim Röntgen, a teacher whom she adored.

She thinks that this adoration of Röntgen goes further than just the adoration of a thirteen-year-old for her teacher: "I was in early adolescence, and I did not have much contact with my father, so I had the feeling that I would love to be Röntgen's daughter. My father was not much at home, and when he was there he paid more attention to my brothers than to me, besides that he was absorbed in his work. My mother was a dominating person, and she was also absorbed in herself and busy with her career. Nor did my parents get along well together. Looking back it is all very understandable; during the war my mother had been alone with the children for a long period, my father being 'the big absent person'. When he came back she was totally used to run her own affairs and raise the children on her own. Then suddenly he was again the man in the house and she had to ask for money to run

the household. That was nothing for her. As a child I just felt that there were problems."

Her parents were not really interested in the development of the violin playing. "I played together with my mother for a short while, but that did not last." Anneke describes her mother as 'a very superior type of person, who had to be perfect in everything'. "She was an alderman in Voorburg for a long period, one of the first female aldermen in the Netherlands. Men were just waiting to show that she would fail at some point, because she was a woman. So she had to be better in her job than an average man. She was under huge pressure."

Anneke was very motivated and crazy about her violin. "I cut out everything, I read, I assembled things. I remember that it used to annoy my father that during dinner I only talked about my violin, while they discussed other things."

At some point Anneke started to play in the Hofstad Youth Orchestra. "The rehearsals were on Saturday evening, my mother did not like that, because the Saturday evening was supposed to be a family evening, with having dinner together and then playing games. The orchestra started at 7, so I had to rush to eat something and then catch two trams to go to the other end of The Hague. Often I came too late at the rehearsal because my mother would not cooperate." Nevertheless the orchestra was wonderful. It became important for Anneke and she gained many friendships there.

Anneke remembers vividly a nasty little history: "My mother made a joke on the first of April.[4] She said, 'Mr. Röntgen has phoned. He wants to start a string quartet of pupils and he invites you to play in that.' I was delighted, I felt in heaven. I had just discovered that playing in a quartet seemed wonderful to me, my teacher being a passionate quartet player himself. Then my mother quickly told me that it was an 'April fools' joke. That was a real blow, I was so disappointed. She would not have realised how terrible I felt that it was only a joke. My world just collapsed. I must have been 14 or 15 years old by then."

Anneke's parents are not alive anymore. Her mother died of an accident a while ago and her father died four years ago, more than ninety years old. During the last years of his life Anneke had a lot of contact with him. "My mother was always a kind of in-between. When she died there was more space for contact between my father and me. I learned about other sides of him."

Grammar school was not a pleasure; Anneke did not like going to school. The violin became her big comrade. Also during the period at grammar school Anneke was again very active in theatre, organising performances for children from the first and second grade, and went to camps to help out with music and leading choirs there. All these activities would pave the way for her future career.

A future emerging and the period at the conservatoire

Anneke cannot remember what triggered her to want to become a professional violinist. At some point her teacher, at that time Ms. Zondag, told her that she still could be a professional violinist, while Anneke thought it would already be too late: "I just thought, 'so it is still possible! Then I want it! Period'. I did not know more about it."

When she went to study with Röntgen she got also lessons in ear training and theory. She immediately stopped playing hockey on Saturday in order to attend these lessons. "I just hoped that I would be able to enter the conservatoire. For me it was obvious, but I don't know if Röntgen was confident about it at that time."

Everything worked out well. But not without having to fight to obtain permission to go to the conservatoire. "My parents were absolutely not enthusiastic. It was such a university-based world in our home. University matters were the only subjects over dinner. It was always about the *Lustrum*, the *Senate*, the *Dies*, I couldn't care less. It took me a lot of arguing and long walks to finally have it my way. In the end they gave in."

In January 1962, half a year after she had earned her diploma of grammar school, Anneke entered the Royal Conservatoire as a student of Joachim Röntgen. She had no clear idea about her future while entering the conservatoire. Playing chamber music, doing projects with children, she liked both. She even entered the class for orchestral studies.[5] But the love for teaching actually emerged at some point, also by the example her teacher gave. It made her switch the focus of her studies. "My teacher found it important that each musician should be able to teach. Every Saturday he taught violin methodology to all his students. That was very intensive and extremely interesting. I loved it. I also did it well. During my final exam for teaching I had to teach a child and that lesson was praised highly. I got a 10.[6] I had of course some experience with children, also through the choirs and I thought, 'this is for me, I like to do this'. Building a relationship with children, teaching children, it is different from teaching yourself." Anneke's boyfriend in this period read Psychology at university, "so things came together as a little jigsaw puzzle."

At the same time Anneke found out that playing in an orchestra was nothing for her. "This atmosphere of nervousness, of having to stand on your toes, I found it too stressful, even when as a violinist you are 'safe' in a group."

Anneke flourished at the conservatoire, feeling much better and enjoying it thoroughly, especially chamber music, like playing string quartet or piano trio with teacher Jan de Man. Theory subjects with Jan van Dijk and Reinbert de Leeuw were equally inspiring and she did very well. She left home, went living with two female friends in a Hague apartment and enjoyed life thoroughly.

She thinks that at the conservatoire she learned a lot of skills required for a

performing musician, but realises she was 'too late for the top'. "You just keep that feeling."

In the conservatoire there was not really space for students' own initiatives. As a student one was for example absolutely not allowed to take on a gig.[7] "If it came out, you could be suspended. It was of course a totally different time. You were not allowed an opinion about it." Reasons for these severe rules consisted of the fear that a student would obtain bad intonation through a gig, or that the repertoire would be less interesting than a Tchaikovsky violin concerto; "hence you could better spend your time practising that". Looking back, Anneke finds it nonsense, but she does place it in its time.

What was fascinating during her time at the conservatoire was the emerging of what she felt as 'another wind blowing', with composers like Louis Andriessen and Micha Mengelberg: "Mengelberg wrote a piece for beach chair and grand piano; his work started stirring things in the school, it made the school fun."

Before she graduated at the conservatoire Anneke married her boyfriend. The marriage would not last; in the second half of the seventies the couple divorced.

Teachers

Despite the new incentives of people like Mengelberg and Andriessen, the instrumental teachers were 'kings, emperors, impressive'. "We looked up to them." Anneke has good memories of several of her teachers, like Theo van der Pas, who taught accompanying: "I remember coming with a piano student to his coaching sessions. The moment he took place behind the piano himself to accompany me, I was immediately on a cloud. That was marvellous and inspiring." Also Arnold van der Meer is well remembered, he taught ear training and the piano, in an inspiring way, but also with an attitude of 'I know it'.

Anneke describes her violin teacher, Joachim Röntgen as "a passionate pedagogue, erudite, and being the youngest in the family of the famous composer, (Julius Röntgen, RS) perhaps a bit spoilt. He was his wife's child." Being one of the last students of the great pedagogue Carl Flesch, Röntgen showed his students the many sides of teaching. He organised presentations for his class and gave string quartet lessons. Röntgen was criticized though, because he would be 'too nice' and not be too bothered when occasionally his students would practise less than required. Anneke did not mind, she was pleased that her teacher was nice, and also that he was always there instead of being mainly on tour, like his colleague. Nevertheless Röntgen was quite critical of his students and could be demanding. Anneke would not describe him as a role model for herself: "of course you tend to use the same words while teaching, but I learned a lot from other people as well. Within limits he gave me a certain amount of freedom, there was some space for my own initiatives."

Building a family and career

Anneke's final exam for violin took place in 1966. On the basis of the results she was invited to continue her study for her solo diploma.[8] She actually started to take it on, but in the next year her son Joachim was born, and the combination of study, taking care of her child and building up a teaching practice, meanwhile having moved to Amsterdam, turned out to be too much.

Gradually she stopped her study with Röntgen and gave up the idea of continuing studies at the conservatoire. In the years to follow she took lessons with several pedagogues, mainly with the violinist Piet Nijland, at that time concertmaster of the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra. In 1969 and 1973 her two daughters were born.

Immediately after graduation Anneke had taken up teaching. During her study at the conservatoire she had already been teaching in Voorburg, now she took up a teaching job at Purmerend, at the Barneveld Music School and later at the Amsterdam Music School. But the job which would become her full fulfilment in her career as a pedagogue came in 1971, when she was appointed at the Amstelveen Community Music School, first as a chamber music teacher, but soon violin pupils started coming more and more and the school grew and started to flourish.

Work at the Amstelveen music school and life changes

The environment in Amstelveen was the same as in many other music schools in that time: consisting of individual lessons, of individual working, there was no chamber music, no things were done together by the team of the teachers and there were very few presentations. Actually it was a building where only private lessons took place and where colleagues met each other by chance on the corridor.

Anneke felt the urge to change things. In 1973 a new colleague was appointed, pianist Dirk-Jan Schilt, who became her soul mate and together they started to work on changing the culture of the school. "The atmosphere was negative; there were colleagues who did not regard anything of importance. I wanted many things and had to do my utmost to establish things that I considered as normal. It was the same for him. Together we tried to inspire the other colleagues, trying to give the example in the broadest sense. Gradually a real team emerged, with people who were passionate about their work."

Anneke and Dirk-Jan married in 1978. In that year their daughter Floortje was born, who would later become a very accomplished violinist.

Anneke regards her husband as the biggest influence on her pedagogical development. Dirk-Jan had been trained as a general teacher, as a classroom music teacher and as a pianist. "Our mutual interests have been enormous from the very beginning. We found each other in the conviction that it is not only the weekly individual lesson that matters but also the many things that are connected to it.

Through him I learned a lot about for example how to build up things with children, sharing the ideas of Kodály[9], working aurally, playing together, about giving presentations, about starting at a young age and connecting elementary rhythms to language." Anneke was already on this pathway, but her contact with Dirk Jan both broadened and deepened it.

What she had missed herself as a child, Anneke gradually made happen to many young children in Amstelveen. It can still make her jealous to see the opportunities these children have. She started pioneering in the field of teaching to play the violin at a young age. With this aim Anneke developed a method for very young children, where four-year-olds learned to play the violin through group tuition, built in a way which initially is aural, filled with songs, rhymes, stories, fairy tales, fantasy animals and dance.

Important for her was a course she took with violinist Ruurd Kooistra in Haarlem, where she learned to improvise and to use her fantasy in a broad way. "He was a kind of 'wild boy', wanting to get rid of the score. It loosened me." She learned a lot in this course about group teaching as well. The course helped her to further develop her methods of working.

In 1993 the method for young violinists, 'Aanloopje' ('a running jump for beginners') which she had developed and been using for years, was published. "Pioneering is learning by doing, talking about it a lot, prepare everything, every day, every year, especially when teaching groups. On the other hand making space during the lessons for detours, but maintaining a framework at the same time. But the most important for me is what the children teach me themselves."

For many years, until this very moment she has delivered a lot of pupils with a high level of playing. Anneke is convinced that the secret of it all is that they have started early in their lives, having all possibilities of motor development ahead of them. In addition: "Knowing what you are doing, being methodical, being aware of the results you expect. I always used all possibilities to reach my goal. So what is my aim? It is to guide the children as far as possible, in such a way that they can enjoy their music-making for the rest of their lives. Whether that is for the profession or not, is not important. My sub motto is: 'the more you learn the more fun it is', so I try to get them practising, teach them to play by memory. All these issues are my top priority in teaching."

Anneke's main approach to learning is to look everywhere and keep what is fit for her purpose. The Suzuki method[10] for example is not appropriate for her goals. "The idea that you copy a CD when playing does not attract me. Nonetheless I can use some of the things of Suzuki. But I feel inspired by Kodály: the children's songs and rhymes as a point of departure, the use of movement and then turning to the instrument." She also made an in-depth study of music methods for toddlers. Anneke still feels challenged to learn new things and develop new pathways.

Every day she works full of enthusiasm, still writing a lot. She likes the creative work, enjoys making little stories for her groups of young children, writing all the music for the *Open Strings Orchestra*, which she has led for many years. "I have a good harmonic ear, and of course I ask Dirk-Jan to look at my arrangements. I ask my cello colleague about the cello part, that is the fun of working together."

In 2002 Anneke suffered a brain haemorrhage, from which she recovered well. Resuming work at first she did not work with the groups of young children, because it might be too tiring. A colleague took over a lot, including the orchestra. This year Anneke took on two groups again, one of six-year olds and one of seven-year olds. She does not teach big groups anymore, nor groups of very small children; four children per group is the maximum now.

She regrets that she has to make choices in teaching, like passing a pupil to a colleague, sometimes it is good for the development of a child to continue with another teacher, and hard to let go. "But it is part of it, and working as a team is the best."

Anneke feels that in the past she has sometimes been too demanding. "For a time I used to be forced and feel stressed when pupils would not fulfil my expectations. I would try to swallow my anger about it. Sometimes I even refused to continue teaching a child. For example I could be very annoyed when they skipped lessons in order to go to a party, without first having tried to change lessons with another pupil. After my brain haemorrhage I became more flexible in that. I realise that it was also my own feeling of inability; if something did not succeed I used to feel it was my fault. I tried to find where my own guilt lay. But I do feel disappointed when children do not practice, when I invest so much in them."

Anneke realises that her relationship with her young pupils is not always comparable to those her colleagues have: "I am engaged with the music and less with the child. I try to fill the time for the lesson fully with music, not with personal life, I have less ties with pupils, others have more. Maybe it is wrong, but I have always kept a distance. I am married and I have children. I separate that from my working relationships. My pupils are not the first circle for me, that is my family. The language in my lessons is music; a child's dead rabbit is important as well, but I am not a therapist. Of course we talk about the dead rabbit, but I will not look for it, those kinds of emotions do not come in the first place for me. I don't need it, I have my family."

Looking back

Anneke finds that many people have influenced her: "If I would mention one, I would forget another." It ranges from her mother, who taught her songs, to her teachers at the conservatoire and her husband, from Ruurd Kooistra to the pedagogue Coosje Wijzenbeek, who taught her daughter Floortje from five years of

age on. Anneke mentions Coosje's lessons to her daughter several times as important learning moments, also for teaching older children. And: "I learn a lot from my own pupils. Observe what they are able to do, and sometimes realising that you expect things of them they cannot do yet. You then have to step back and you learn from that. You can do so many things with little children, often I notice that colleagues only find that out once they have children themselves."

She also learned a lot from visiting yearly the Swiss festival of Tibor Varga, with masterclasses and a competition. "We went a lot with Floortje to various places, In the UK, in Poland, everywhere I learned a lot of different things."

She has to think hard about the question regarding what she is most satisfied with in her career, and finally says, "the cooperation with Dirk-Jan. We have really transformed this music school into something very good. The cooperation with other colleagues, what we established, I hope we have really set an example in the Netherlands."

She feels that the profession of teaching music is no longer regarded as second rate by students of conservatoires, and that the current generation of students choosing to be a teacher does that in full consciousness and with the right motivation.

Anneke found it very hard when her daughter Floortje, who from early childhood had grown into a very accomplished young violinist and was studying with a scholarship in the USA, suddenly gave up her violin study, and came back to the Netherlands to read Archaeology. "She told us she wanted 'a real study'. We found it hard to accept, because she is so talented, she plays the violin so extremely beautifully…" Meanwhile Floortje took up her violin study again, and will in 2006 graduate at the Salzburg Mozarteum.

Future plans

Anneke starts every day with one hour of practising. Once a week she plays string quartets with friends and piano trios with two colleagues. In one and a half years Anneke will retire from her position at the music school. She is not willing to think it over yet, it is too far away. "I might continue teaching privately, but we want to travel as well. I am sure that I will remain busy with things, but I have no special ambitions for the future. Just do the things I like to do, like being a good jury member of the *Jordens Violin Days*[11], coming up this weekend. I will see what comes my way. I want to do my job very well until the end, and say goodbye in a good way, so that people keep good memories of me. I want to be a nice grandmother, see a lot of my grandchildren and do things with them. Last week I just performed a Christmas play with my eight grandchildren."

Interview held January 4, 2006 in Amstelveen

Teachers/Music educators IV

1 Based on a special pedagogy, developed by Maria Montessori, with as main focus creating a personal learning path of the pupil.
2 Written by Cor Bruijn and M. Bruijn-de Vries.
3 Part of the Lyceum.
4 In many countries a date on which people make jokes with other people.
5 In that time you entered the conservatoire in the class for orchestral studies or in the class for a performer/teacher diploma, comparable to a bachelor's study. This could be followed by a 'solo diploma', comparable to a master's study.
6 Highest mark in the Netherlands.
7 Anneke uses the word 'schnabbel' here: meaning a paid gig.
8 Nowadays a master's diploma.
9 Hungarian composer who developed a method of aural training for children based on folk songs.
10 Japanese method, built on playing from CDs, with as an often-mentioned objection that it disregards learning to read music.
11 A yearly recurring violin competition for young talents taking place at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague; winners have come occasionally from Anneke's class.

Nander Cirkel

Cellist Nander Cirkel was born in 1978 and started to play the cello in 1986. For a long period he had lessons with Robert Dispa, a well-known cello pedagogue. Nander studied at the Arnhem Conservatoire for one year with Michel Dispa and in 1997 entered the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague, where he studied with Gregor Horsch. Nander won several prizes in competitions, and was finalist in 1997 in the European Music Competition for Youth in Oslo. During his study at the Royal Conservatoire Nander was one of the founders of the Matangi String Quartet, which developed into a very successful young string quartet. In 2001 Nander graduated in The Hague. From 2002 till 2004 he took together with the other members of the Matangi Quartet lessons with cellist Stefan Metz in the String Quartet Academy in Amsterdam. In 2006 Nander left the quartet. He is now orientating himself on new steps in his career.

I would not have wanted to miss anything of what I experienced, least of all the quartet.

Nander Cirkel was born in 1978 in Zaandam in the Netherlands. He has one brother, Michon, who is two and a half year older. When Nander was still a toddler the family moved to a village near Zutphen, called Oeken, where he spent his childhood. Nander's father worked as a technical teaching assistant in a school; his mother was at home. He feels it is 'sheer coincidence' that he became a musician, because, apart from a grandmother who taught the piano at an amateur level and far back in the family, a double bass player who played in the Concertgebouw Orchestra, music was not really a big topic in the family.

School years

Nander spent two years at a primary school in Oeken and at the age of eight changed schools for an anthroposophy-based primary school in Zutphen. "The reason was very simple; I was terribly pestered. I felt that the only way to get out of it was to flee."

Nander had been bullied from the very beginning at school, and when he changed schools things went much better. "Of course my mind was preoccupied by those years of bullying, it is hard to forget that. It still happened from time to time, probably because, due to my experiences, I made myself smaller than I actually was. But I remember clearly the first time I went to have a look at the school with my parents; I saw a small group of children who were playing around, and one of them hurt himself. The other two children went to him and helped him. I then realised that this was something I did not know at all from my other school. So that gave me confidence. And I was helped a lot to start to feel at ease in the new class."

Meanwhile Nander had become a pupil of the municipal music school in Dieren. At the initiative of his mother, who felt that making music should be part of his education, he took an introductory year in 1985 and in 1986 decided to learn to play the cello. "My brother had chosen to play the piano, which was a big and sturdy instrument. So I wanted a big and sturdy instrument as well. I considered an organ, an oboe, but my lungs were still too small for that, and then the director of the music school suggested that I should play a string instrument because in the introductory year it appeared that I was musically talented. So I considered the sturdiness of string instruments and chose the cello. It still makes me happy that this has happened, because I find it a beautiful instrument."

From the very first moment Nander was very enthusiastic. During the first lesson his teacher gave him a cello and a bow and he was told to leave the cello alone and first learn how to hold the bow. "Of course I did not like that, so as soon as I was back home, I immediately picked up my cello and started to play, I didn't care what it sounded like."

Music became important at home as well from that moment. Before Nander started to play the cello his parents never listened to classical music, but that changed. "Now my father listens to it a lot, and meanwhile he has become knowledgeable about it. And my mother helped me a lot during my time at the music school and after that. My teacher involved my mother as well, by asking her to help me practise for example."

The new school was not only a much better environment for Nander because pestering had stopped, but also because it was a school that was culturally engaged. His teacher took into account that he needed time and space for practicing, and there were more children making music in the class. A lot of interesting music events happened.

The cello lessons

Nander's first cello teacher was Leo van der Kamp. At first Nander had lessons together with another pupil, but at a certain moment his teacher split the lesson, because Nander was far ahead.

After about a year of lessons Nander's teacher got a motor accident and was temporarily replaced by another teacher. This teacher was astonished by the bad instrument Nander played. "I had loaned the cello of the music school; the instrument was worthless, it was more or less held together with tape. My new teacher said that I absolutely needed a better cello. So then my mother tried to find out how to get one, because there was no money at home. She then came into contact with Ms. van Waveren[1], who initially told her that there were many mothers who called her on behalf of their children, saying that they were so talented. 'Are you certain?' she asked my mother. My mother, having always been very modest, said, 'Well, people say so,' so Ms. van Waveren arranged that I should play for an

expert who would advise her on this matter. And this is how I came to know Robert Dispa, who lived in Haaksbergen, and who taught at the Arnhem Conservatoire. Mr. Dispa told my parents immediately after I had played to him that he was willing to teach me. When my parents told him that this would be financially impossible he said that he would not charge them; the only thing of importance was that I would have the right attention. And so I got a good cello and a good teacher."

Nander liked the lessons with Robert Dispa, in the end he stayed eight years with him. Dispa gave him a really sound basis for cello playing; Nander experienced it as very structured, which was helpful for him. He learned to practise systematically and to work steadily on his technique.

Support and motivation – the choice for the profession

Nander got a lot of support from his parents, especially from his mother, and in a way he is grateful for this. "I have seen so many mothers who pushed their children, thinking they were miracles, but my mother is very modest, she just guided and encouraged me."

Nander played in two successive orchestras in the Dieren music school, and did some composing ("I wrote a piece, 'the School Trip', with all kinds of quotations from other compositions, it became a fun piece"), which he wouldn't pursue in later years.

He worked hard, also thanks to his mother. "She made it clear to me that I was not obliged to practise hard, but if I wanted to make music my profession and to have her help, it would mean that I would have to work hard. And also Robert told me that I should practise for three hours a day. I did that and at a certain moment it became four, five hours a day."

Nander feels he was very motivated. "Otherwise I would not have been able to bring myself to practise so much. I liked practising; whenever Robert gave me a new study I would put my teeth into it and then prepare it very well for the next lesson. In total I would work for a few weeks on a new study. I liked playing new repertoire. And Robert stimulated me by giving me challenging repertoire, like the Haydn cello concerto in C major, which I started to practise soon after I came to him. I cannot remember whether it sounded good, but I was definitely able to play it."

The choice to make a career in music was one which gradually developed. "Music became a more and more serious matter, and actually as soon as I had lessons with Robert I knew I wanted to continue professionally, although during my period of adolescence I had been thinking whether I might have other talents as well. And actually today I am at that point again."

After the period at primary school Nander continued in the anthroposophy-based, secondary school. It was ideal for him, because he liked the school and the school

was willing to grant him time to dedicate to music and practise the cello. In total he would go on till the eleventh class.[2]

After a few years of private lessons, the Arnhem Conservatoire, where Mr. Dispa was a teacher, started on his initiative a course for young talents. Robert took his young pupil there. At some point Nander got theory lessons as well, and in 1995 he was placed in the Junior School of the Arnhem Conservatoire and got a new teacher, Michel Dispa, Robert's son. Nander's development went well; he won several prizes in competitions for young talented musicians.

Entering the conservatoire in Arnhem

Nander thinks it was good to change teachers. He had had lessons from Robert Dispa for many years, and felt that it was enough. His teacher had told him what he had to say, and that he should now move on with another teacher. Besides, Michel was gradually taking over his father's practice in Arnhem, Robert being near retirement age.

Looking back Nander feels that Robert Dispa has probably been the most influential person for his development up till now. "He considered me as a son, he even told me that. When I had my anniversary he would give me a present. And when I came to his house to have lessons he used to let me listen to music as well. I remember I made a drawing for him in wood."

Nander entered the first year of the conservatoire in 1996 and skipped his twelfth year at secondary school. "This was out of sheer impatience; the anthroposophical secondary school worked with building up a portfolio throughout the years. I was a gifted pupil, I worked for it and actually I had gained enough credits at the end of my eleventh year to have my diploma. But I still had to do a year, and I did not feel like it. I had the feeling that actually I had already passed the final examination, and I was dying to go to the conservatoire. So in the end because my results had always been very good the director of the conservatoire decided to make an exception for me and I was admitted without having an official diploma from the secondary school."

He liked his study at the Arnhem Conservatoire. It was a joy to meet lots of soul mates. Of course he had had them in secondary school as well, but still this was different. "Everybody was very much engaged and passionate about music. I was even fanatic. We had introductory days, which I loved, being with a group of first years students, getting to know each other, and talk about music, about your motivation, I loved it."

However, Nander spent only one year in Arnhem, the reason being that his teacher Michel Dispa left. Nander decided to go to the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague, after he had taken a 'taster lesson' with cellist Gregor Horsch.

Continuing the study in The Hague

The change from Arnhem to The Hague was quite big. Nander felt once he had arrived in The Hague, in 1997, that he came into a much more professional environment. "In Arnhem there were not enough students and it could happen that during an orchestral project there would be only two students present at the first rehearsal, because nobody was really interested. In The Hague there were big projects, which were realised in a very structured way, with group rehearsals from the very beginning where everybody was present. And then we were really having rehearsals for a full week. So I had the feeling that I had made a good step."

Nander felt at his place in The Hague because he met more fellow students who were as passionate as he was and "I was one of the many, which was good for me." He did not feel that he had to compete however: "When I entered the school I was already a very good cellist. I had had this wonderful basis with Robert, and many other cello students looked at me in an admiring way."

Being in the environment of the conservatoire stimulated Nander's self-confidence. Things changed considerably compared to the time he was pestered in school. "Over the years my self-confidence grew, even more once we had started the string quartet. In secondary school I had still been quite timid and shy. But being in the conservatoire I felt amongst soul mates; I felt that I could cope with the people around me as equals. That worked positively. I did not feel only that I was okay as a cellist, but I also started to feel that I was okay as a person."

His development continued excellently; in 1997 Nander went on tour with the *Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra*, conducted by Pierre Boulez, ("that was really *cool*") and in the same year he was finalist in the European Music Competition for Youth in Oslo.

The lessons with Gregor Horsch were quite different from what Nander was used to. Nander felt that Gregor was quite absorbed in building up his own career as a principal cellist in the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. "He was full of plans, but actually the things he announced didn't happen. During the first lesson he told me that he wanted to work in a structured and thematic way with the students, but in reality I was more or less left to my own device, so what I did was go to him with what I had decided to prepare. He did help me to choose repertoire though, but mostly I did it on my own."

Nander didn't feel helpless nevertheless, he feels that he has always been quite capable to find out and learn things himself. He finds, however, that his former teacher Robert Dispa was a much better observer, being a teacher who really tried to establish what kind of a musician his student was. "Gregor Horsch realised that one student could be different to another, and that this meant having different approaches, but that was about all."

Emergence of the Matangi Quartet

In 1999 Nander started, together with three other musicians, a string quartet. A violinist, Maria-Paula Majoor, asked him to play in a string quartet for her final examination. She asked another violin student and a violist she knew, and who studied in Rotterdam. The young musicians didn't know each other very well, but after a few rehearsals they got along well, both musically and personally and they decided that it would be a wonderful challenge to try and continue as a professional quartet. Nander was at that moment in the third year of his bachelor's phase.

The members of the quartet were very enthusiastic, but the school responded in a less positive way. "We did not get space, either from the school or from our individual teachers. They were all worried that we would not practise enough individually. We did not get any support for obtaining lessons as a quartet for example. We played for Gregor occasionally, but he didn't encourage us. He more or less told me that when I threw myself into the ensemble, things would not turn out well for me." Nevertheless the quartet stubbornly went on and tried to find enough time to practise seriously. They chose a name as well for their quartet, *Matangi,* being the daughter of Matang Rishi, the Indian goddess of speech, music and prose.

A real nadir was the fact that in the summer of 2000 the quartet was forbidden to take part in a course in London of the world famous Amadeus Quartet to which they were invited. "It was at the end of the school year when this course would take place, nearly at the beginning of the summer holiday. There was an orchestral project taking place, so we sent a letter to ask permission not to take part in the project and take up this opportunity in London. But we failed to get permission. I must say we were naughty and ignored it. We *did* go; it was too wonderful a chance not to do it. And there were more of these opportunities." Working with the Amadeus Quartet was utterly inspiring for the four musicians.

In 2001 Nander obtained his bachelor's diploma. He started on his master's but left the conservatoire after one year to enter together with the other members of the quartet the *String Quartet Academy*[3] in 2002. "It was of course crazy that we did not get any coaching at the conservatoire, more so because for three years, *during* our study we had made our choice for the future. So when Stefan Metz of the String Quartet Academy approached us, it did not take us much time to decide to say yes. We had the feeling that we might enter an institution that understood us, in contrast to the Hague Conservatoire."

The commitment amongst the members of the quartet was enormous. "We really talked the offer through; basically it was about the question whether we were willing to give up the conservatoire. And that was quite a decision; Maria-Paula was studying for her master's degree, and meanwhile had a well paid job, but Karsten and Daniel[4] were still undergraduate students."

And also Stefan Metz had his demands; he required the quartet members to practise for three hours a day as a quartet, and not to take any job in addition to it. On the other hand he provided them with a scholarship. Furthermore, the quartet had to seek permission for everything it wanted to do and most of the time it was not given. But Stefan organised concerts for them, which resulted in a lot of new demand.

Nander considers the period at the String Quartet Academy, which lasted from 2002 till 2004 as both a very good and difficult time. "It was very good because Stefan could really teach us the basis of string quartet playing. He could spend hours on the intonation of three notes, until we were certain that we were perfectly in tune and *why* we were perfectly in tune. He also addressed a lot of other issues for establishing the basis of quartet playing. Stefan now taught us as a quartet in the same thorough way as Robert as a cellist had taught me. So it went well, but Stefan is by nature very impatient; he found that things didn't develop fast enough. He warned us several times during the first year that he was not satisfied enough, also just before our examination for the second year. That was both stimulating and discouraging. So actually we lost a bit our confidence and sat down together in order to consider whether we should go on. That was difficult, we had quit the conservatoire in order to go here, and now we were considering quitting again. So then we decided to do this second year, and during that year things went much better."

Stefan Metz worked twice a week intensively with the Matangi Quartet, and once a month the musicians had a weeklong masterclass of a musician from an international quartet, like the Amadeus Quartet or the Borodin Quartet. It worked in two ways: "It was good for us, because we got a lot of ideas and incentives, and so came to defer our own artistic choices and conceptions; on the other hand it was confusing, because the first teacher could tell you something and the second could then say one month later that it was nonsense."

After two years at the String Quartet Academy the Matangi quartet was really convinced that they needed one single coach and they then worked for a time with violist Henk Guittart.[5] "Together with him we really sorted out who we were as a quartet and what we wanted, instead of doing everything someone else required." The quartet worked with Henk Guittart for two more years and then continued on its own.

They became very successful, won a few major prizes and distinguished themselves by finding new ways to reach audiences for classical music, amongst other things by making programmes with famous Dutch cabaret performers like Youp van 't Hek en Herman van Veen.

Management of the quartet

Considering the period behind him at the conservatoire and the string quartet academy Nander feels that the conservatoire especially should have reacted in a

different way to the ambitions of the young quartet. "A conservatoire needs to be aware that there are other important things in developing your career than just the music-making. Entrepreneurship is much more important than the school and a lot of its students realise. The training at the conservatoire should be twofold, both artistically and also about how you are going to cope in the outside world. I did not learn anything at all about that." He feels that a conservatoire should be more facilitating instead of offering standard tuition.

Nevertheless Nander took upon himself the management of the ensemble from the very beginning. "I did it because I had the most affinity with it. In the beginning it consisted of an occasional telephone call, for example when we were offered a concert. I would organise it and we would go there. But that increased and at a certain moment I would be sitting more behind my desk making phone calls than practising my cello. That is when we took a manager. We hired someone ourselves; we did not need an agent, because we had a lot of offers. The only thing that needed to be done was structuring things and organising, sending out mail, and so on."

Nander did the management for a long time, from three to four of the six years that he was a member of the quartet. "We wanted to be really good. I think that this is the reason that we had a lot of offers. People saw our enthusiasm. I think our PR was really strong. I built a website, I made contacts with the press, and soon we made a CD. I was not so much the person with the ideas, we all had ideas, but I had my mind very much on the marketing. I was good at realising these ideas in practice." Marketing interested Nander. He started to read books about it and became very interested in design.

Nander has had a fascination for ICT from early childhood on. "I am not satisfied with just a website, I want to connect it to a database or an agenda. I always used to work out those kind of things, learning by trial and error." He likes doing different things: "I can't do just one thing. I can't imagine playing the cello till I am 65 and that is it. I need to discover new things all the time."

A major decision

In the beginning of 2006 Nander decided to leave the quartet. That was a major decision, because it meant as much as leaving his job, while not having another to go to. "It was my own decision to step out of it. One of the reasons is the fact that I want to think for myself. I felt more and more dissatisfaction with the other members that I became involved with other things than just the playing in the quartet. They reproached me that I was busier with the website than with the cello. We had a lot of discussions about it, in which I used to state that working on my general development benefits my cello playing. Our views often conflicted, resulting in my feeling less and less at home in the group, and the idea occurred to me that I might want to do something else after six years. We had always said to each other that we would go on till 2040, and at some point someone who was

making a documentary about us asked us whether we realised what a long period this is. We had not realised that at all, of course. Perhaps it would have worked out till 2040 with another group of people. But we were so different; we realised that and considered that artistically it could be an advantage, but that it is sometimes also hard to understand each other. And at this point my feeling was that I did not feel understood enough to live as I wanted to."

It was a hard decision and understandably the members of the quartet reacted quite emotional. It was unexpected for them. "There was conflict in the air, but that happened approximately once a year. Nobody thought it couldn't be solved." In the end his colleagues respected Nander's choice.

Artistic learning

"I think that artistically we were quite balanced, that we all added to the whole. That went for choice of repertoire as well. I think that during rehearsals Maria-Paula (the 1st violinist, RS) and I were the leading musicians. We both speak up easily, when musically we want to do it differently. I think we were kind of cornerstones and that the other two fitted very well within that."

The approach to gaining a conception of a piece was very different between the members. Nander did not want to be influenced and wished to form his own opinion first, Maria-Paula liked to listen to different interpretations on CDs first. "I wanted to take the open approach, she wanted to approach it from tradition; actually that was complementary. Then comes the whole process of rehearsing and refining of course."

There was not much discussion during rehearsals, "we worked more intuitively. A few times we said to each other that we should talk more about our interpretation of the music. It was a point that was a bit weak; we took part in several competitions and often got the comment that basically we played very well but that they missed a conception. During concerts that was never a problem, our enthusiasm was everything for the audience. But this conception thing, yes it was an issue. We often said to each other that we should work on that in a structured way. I don't think that we had any idea how to go about it. I had the feeling that we were at a deadlock there. Even last December we said to each other that we should think more in-depth about musical issues, develop a vocabulary for that; find a way to discuss it. But it did not happen. It was not the primary reason for me to step out of the quartet, because I think that in the end we would have solved it."

Nander feels that dealing with issues like developing an artistic concept was not really at stake in the conservatoire either. Analysis is given, which is helpful to set an important first step, but there is no coherent tuition, where a musical vocabulary is central and where the student's inquisitiveness is addressed, he finds.

The role of his teachers in his learning process

Nander considers himself as someone who learns a lot by himself; "I always have had a lot of initiative. Robert Dispa guided me well but I wanted to sort it out for myself as well. During the period with Gregor I had to find out a lot for myself, sometimes too much." Actually Nander feels that he has had two totally different major teachers. On the one hand Robert Dispa, who taught him in a structured way and provided him with a thorough basis and working attitude and through that actually taught him to deal with his later teacher Gregor Horsch. "Gregor worked on my technique and musicianship. But I did a lot on my own. I remember looking at my fellow students in The Hague sometimes, while thinking 'why are you making yourself so dependent of a teacher who tells you that next week he wants to hear this or that study?' I think it might be good for a lot of people, but not for me. I often have the feeling that I could have found my pathway also on my own, without Gregor."

Robert Dispa was certainly a role model, Nander feels, his son Michel in a way as well, but Gregor Horsch not. "I remember that when I heard Gregor playing I liked his style of playing, but I did not want to play like him." Robert was a role model to him "because he was so skilled, and so dedicated. And Michel because I found him a wonderful cellist. When I heard him play on a concert I was really impressed, thinking 'I want to play like that too.'"

Fear of failure?

Nander can deal quite well with nerves, but there is a big difference whether he plays for a jury or for an audience. "When I play for a jury I have the feeling that somebody is sitting there judging me, while I feel that it is more important what the experience is for the listener rather than the technical aspect. Technique is a supporting tool. As long as I have the feeling that I have something to say musically, and that I keep developing myself and play passionately and am able to transmit that, I don't worry so much about the audience's opinion. In a conservatoire a jury also listens to your technical development. That is okay; it is also their task. But I think that during big international string quartet competitions, in which we took part as well, juries often look too much to the technique. I noticed with the other quartet members that they had great fears of playing a wrong note and then not getting into the second round. And that image of failure emerges out of how a jury deals with it. I disagree with it. I think a jury should in the first place consider someone's possibilities and judge according to what someone has to say musically."

Physically Nander has always coped very well, except for a short period when during a festival in France in 2002 he got an injury, by playing too long and intensively.

Considering new choices – within music

"I have thought for a long time that the quartet would be a very long period of engagement for me. I made my plans for that, together with the others. But when the feeling emerged about perhaps not wanting to do it for a lifetime, I had made up my mind within two weeks. I suddenly saw what I had been pushing away for quite a while. I am someone who thinks quite analytically, and I suddenly could put two and two together. I realised I could not solve the problems with them."

At the moment Nander is considering his future. He is certain that music has to have a central role in it. "I want to continue playing the cello professionally, and everything I am interested in, like marketing, design, websites, ICT, everything I will develop has to do with music." Currently Nander is taking on different jobs, but his aim is to be back in music work within half a year, preferably using all these areas of interest.

Nander does not know exactly what he needs to learn at present. "On the long term I have a few ideas I want to work out, but I do not learn in order to learn, I learn because I want to do something. So first I will make my plan, and while giving shape to that plan, I will establish what I need." Currently Nander is thinking over ideas of connecting pop music to classical music. But he doesn't know yet – it is only four weeks ago that he left the quartet.

"I am now at a point in my life that my future is open. I was at that point earlier, during my adolescence, but then I did not really have the chance for such a choice, because I kind of fell into the cello and it was clear that I would continue professionally with that, and after all which my parents had done for me there were also expectations about that from their side. I could not say then 'you know, I think I'll stop with music.' I invested my whole youth in it, it was not an option." No harm done; Nander's love for music and his motivation is intrinsic: "I would not have wanted to miss anything of what I experienced, the least of all the quartet." He feels positive and optimistic.

Looking back and to the future – today's profession

Looking back Nander is the least satisfied about his period at the conservatoire. On the other hand he thinks that period was good as well because he had to be very pro-active himself. "With regard to my musical development it was a nadir, but for myself as a human being it was a good development to have to do things on my own. And I think in terms of heights the quartet was a height, because everything I wanted to do with it I did and experienced. The six years in the quartet were a learning path and a path of personal and musical growth. I learned about my career, about making relations in the music world, which is very important. In many aspects the quartet has been for me something where a lot of things came together."

Thinking about reaching new audiences is something Nander wants to focus on, especially young audiences. "I read a while ago about an investigation about visitors and target groups. It showed that classical music has a much bigger target group than the *musical*. I then wondered how it is possible that musicians in musicals earn so much more money. Those kinds of societal questions intrigue me. I wonder what we do wrong. I think that in the music world we need to become more professionalized. I experienced it with the quartet, concerts are often organised by amateurs, who are totally dedicated, but not business-like at all. When you look at other professions, it is simply not done not to answer an e-mail within a few days. In the music world it is totally normal that you wait for an answer for three weeks. Many things do not have a professional basis. I think there is a lot to do in terms of gaining knowledge. I am thinking about those kind of niches in the market where I might jump in."

Nander sees himself not so much as a musician, more as an artist. "I would not want that to sound arrogant, but what I mean is that I feel someone who tries to find his way in the most creative way possible as a musician. What is very important for me is the *perception* of art. I think that as a musician one should position oneself as a kind of entertainer. We will see. It was indeed remarkable that we could earn a living as a quartet, in classical music you don't earn too much. I once found out that it is at the utmost eight Euros an hour. That is a minimum wage."

Nander feels that his life span and career span are one and the same until now. "I think that the very first part of my life, when I was pestered so much, has a lot to do with it. When you are pestered you are oppressed, and as a reaction you can only do one thing: do things for yourself. In that very phase I learned to build things for myself and I think that it has become very influential in my life. I also think that if it would not have happened I would have become another human being. I used to be quite extravert, and now I am more introvert, and I like that. Had things been different I might not have ended up in music. It was a terrible period, and during my period of puberty I had the feeling that my childhood had been poisoned. But looking back, I think things have turned out well. I have gained self-confidence because I have discovered my strengths and I think that it is important for me that I can keep things in my own hand. I have no secondary school diploma; I quit the master's at the conservatoire, now I step out of the quartet. I do these things as long as I think that they are good for me. In school I was only waiting because I had long understood. At the conservatoire it was the same, and now it is the same again. I think that the things I do have a lot of influence on my personal pathway. Without the quartet I would never have become engaged in marketing, for example. As soon as I encounter influences that do not feel good for my development I stop, like with the quartet. Many people told me they thought it brave of me to step out of the quartet. I find it obvious. I think that this will also go for my future: as soon as

history starts repeating itself I'm off, because I will constantly need new challenges and opportunities to gain new ideas and work them out."

Interview held March 13, 2006 in The Hague

1 At that time Ms. Juut van Waveren was representing a foundation that tried to provide instruments to talented children in need of financial support.
2 In the anthroposophy-based schools in the Netherlands primary and secondary school together take 12 years.
3 A two year private postgraduate course for talented string quartets, led by cellist Stefan Metz, former cellist of the Orlando Quartet.
4 Violist Karsten Kleijer and violinist Daniel Torrico Menacho.
5 Violist in the Schoenberg Quartet.

Oene van Geel

Oene van Geel (1973) studied jazz violin and composition/arranging at the Rotterdam Conservatoire in the Netherlands. Whether he plays viola, violin or percussion, Oene van Geel is always integrating elements from different musical traditions such as jazz and improvised music, pop & funk music, contemporary music, classical music and ethnic music from around the world. Oene toured around Europe, Canada, India and the Netherlands Antilles with a wide variety of groups. He played with musicians like Mark Haanstra, Jozef Dumoulin, Ernst Reijseger, Harmen Fraanje, Hein van de Geijn, Benjamin Herman, Fay Claassen, David Kweksilber, Guus Janssen, Michael Moore, Ab Baars, Martin van Duinhoven, Alan Purves, Frank Wingold, Joost Lijbaart, Chander Sardjoe, Anton Goudsmit, Albert van Veenendaal, Mathilde Santing, Arnold Dooyeweerd, Yuri Honing, Maarten Ornstein, Tony Overwater, Corrie van Binsbergen, Mike Kenealy, George Coleman and many others. As a bandleader and sideman Oene is very active in the Dutch jazz scene. He won the Anderson Jazz Award 2002 with the Jazz Orchestra of the Concertgebouw. With his group 'On The Line' he won the Dutch Jazz Competition 2001. With his group 'Mosaic' he won the Jur Naessens Muziekprijs 2000. He founded many groups, among them 'GEEL!'. In 1998 this group won the Dutch Jazz Contest and got second prize at the Getxo International Jazz Contest (Spain). In 1997 he won the composition contest of the Amersfoorts Jazz Festival with a composition for his string quartet 'ZAPP!', consisting of Jasper le Clercq, violin; Friedmar Hitzer, violin/viola; Oene van Geel, viola/violin and Emile Visser, cello. As a composer Oene van Geel writes for a lot of the groups he plays with: Zapp String Quartet, Osmosis, Voer, Pavlov, Bruinsma Syndicaat, duo Kaufmann/Van Geel, the Wereldband. He made compositions for Tetsepi Bigtet, rietkwintet Calefax, Bhedam, Peter Ypma + eleven and a multimedia production with animation artist Petra Dolleman. Pieces of Oene were performed by the Jazz Orchestra of the Concertgebouw, led by Henk Meutgeert. As an assignment for the VPRO radio and the SJU Jazz festival 2002 he wrote 'Chamber Grooves' for the Zapp String Quartet with special guests: David Kweksilber (clarinet/bass clarinet) and Jozef Dumoulin (piano). As an assignment for NPS radio and the Marathon festival 2002 he wrote new music for Osmosis. For the VPRO Children's programme he composed music for Michael Moore, Guus Janssen, David Kweksilber, Joshua Samson, Tony Overwater and himself. For four years Oene's composing has been subsidized by the Fonds voor de Scheppende Toonkunst (a government-subsidized fund).

I think that by nature I am looking for cutting edges, finding building blocks of many different influences.

Childhood and music-making

Coming from a family in which music had a central place, Oene van Geel was born in Amsterdam in 1973 as the oldest child in a family consisting of three children. Two years later his brother was born and six years later a younger sister. Oene's father, who works as a biologist at the Amsterdam University, played the guitar, was very interested in music from the Balkans and sang mediaeval and renaissance music in a choir. His mother had administrative jobs in schools. Many family gatherings took place with the grandparents, uncles and aunts, where there was sometimes more music-making than talking.

When Oene was three years old, the family moved to the little village of Oostzaan, near Amsterdam. There he went to primary school. He has no vivid memories of music at primary school: "It was totally dependent on the interest of the teacher."

At the age of eleven the family moved to Landsmeer, also near Amsterdam. From there Oene later went each day by bicycle or bus to the Amsterdam Montessori Lyceum and then from 1985 he went to the Atheneum.[1]

As an eight year old boy Oene had his first violin lessons. His teacher was Jan Henrichs, who also taught at the Amsterdam Conservatoire. Oene enjoyed the lessons. He describes the music in his childhood as 'hobbyism'. "I was not a young talented violinist who from an early age performed a lot." Oene always wanted to improvise and he played a lot with his father. From the age of twelve he got interested in folk music, and during secondary school he began to play in folk-rockbands. He then gradually wanted to do more things with jazz and improvising, but it was not easy to find someone to teach him.

Oene does not remember why he started to play the violin. "My parents tell me that I enjoyed Rumanian folk music, so I take it that it has to do with that." His father often took him to concerts and he also got to know a lot of pop music.

He liked school and its atmosphere: "It was okay, I didn't have to work too hard and had enough time to do fun things and to make music." There was not much music-making in secondary school, but Oene remembers vividly the musical *Rocky Horror Show*, in which he played and sang the main role. He loved it.

Oene's brother played the guitar and his sister the violin but they didn't continue once they were adolescents. Oene feels that he continued to play the violin during adolescence because he was challenged by the youth orchestras he played in and a jazz ensemble he started to play in. "Playing in ensembles is the best, it got me motivated and it still does." Oene feels that he just enjoyed playing during the period at the Atheneum, but that he was not ambitious at all for his instrument: "I did it just for fun."

Oene changed teachers when he was twelve. Mr. Henrichs taught him classical music, and Oene wanted to do different things, among which in the first place was improvising. "It appears that from the very beginning, I never played what was

written, I did not bother to read the notes, I did everything by ear. My teacher used to point out that it sounded nice, but that it was not what was actually written in the score."

He then got lessons with Nienke Loodsma. She taught classical music, but folk music as well. In the last year of the Atheneum Oene met a young jazz violinist, Arjen de Graaf, who taught him for one year. Oene liked it, because for the first time improvisation was taken in hand during the lessons. Until that moment Oene had only done this by intuition, but now he learned about the harmonic structures of jazz. From 1989 Oene started to play the piano. He got lessons at the music school from Albert van Veenendaal who worked on improvisation with him as well. Oene did his final examination for the Atheneum in 1991.

Choice for the music profession

Oene never considered going to the conservatoire. He thought that he would become a psychologist or a doctor. It was only in the last year of the Atheneum that he changed his mind towards music. "I was just seventeen years old, when I started realising that music was what I wanted. I wrote music at that time. I remember that I talked to Joyce Tan, who teaches talented young violinists. I told her that I considered being a music teacher, mainly because I thought that my instrumental level wouldn't be good enough to study the violin as a principal instrument. But she advised me to play. She said that I am a performer and told me that I should pursue that, instead of thinking over whether I would be good enough."

Oene's motivation to choose the music profession was quite simple: "I told myself that I had to find a profession which I would still enjoy when I am sixty years old, and in which there are continuously new discoveries to be made." Playing folk music, also abroad in France and England during holidays had triggered his love for music-making even more.

He did not have specific aims in mind. "I thought, 'let's see what is in me'. Once at the conservatoire I really had to become serious about things; there was a lot to do on my technique for example."

His parents were not against his choice, but weren't encouraging it either. "My mother was more positive than my father, who felt strongly that I should consider studying at university and keep my music as a hobby, just as he had done. There are lots of young people who can play like the devil when they are 17 years old, and with me that was not the case."

Jazz violin study at the Rotterdam Conservatoire

Oene chose to do an entrance examination at the Rotterdam Conservatoire, at that time being the only school where jazz violin was taught. As he was musical, and had already gained enough background in theory, Oene was admitted in the first year. He liked the fact that the Rotterdam Conservatoire also had a department of

World Music. His teacher was Michael Gustorff. He studied classical violin with Thijs Kramer. Oene was very pleased with his principal study teacher Gustorff: "He was a fine pedagogue, also someone who felt the psychological side of things really well; he kept motivating me."

He found the first year challenging: "I had to work very hard. When I did my examination for the second year, the jury felt like 'let's see', because it was not that good. But after that year it went better and better, and in the end I graduated for the second phase study[2] in 1997 after six years with a 9[3], and without first passing a first phase exam.[4]"

After two years of commuting between Landsmeer and Rotterdam, Oene went to live in Rotterdam.

In his fourth and fifth year Oene took composition of light music as a second principal study, with Rob van der Linde, Rob Pronk and a few lessons with the well-known American jazz musician Bob Brookmeyer. He liked to combine both studies, but found it quite demanding as well. "Actually the idea was that I would basically learn to write for the Big Band, but being cocky, I did my own things. Some teachers pointed out classical music to me, like music of Ravel and Bartók, which appeals to me a lot. Today I would still love to analyse Bartók's fourth string quartet in-depth." He had orchestration lessons with the Dutch composer Klaas de Vries and counterpoint with Folkert Grondsma. "Funny, isn't it, those two subjects which I liked the most, counterpoint and orchestration, were from a classical direction." Oene gives an example of the clarity and thoroughness of Grondsma's tuition: "If I wrote down a C where it should be a B sharp, he would point that out to me. I liked getting deep into the 'why' behind things."

Those 'basic craft' lessons gave him a lot of technical foundation for his own composing: "It opened doors for me, I realised that there were many different ways of looking at music. It is interesting to combine jazz harmony with the influence of the voicing of counterpoint. There are a lot of universals there, like being aware of heights and depths in melody lines. I liked to think in a complementary way."

Oene had jazz violin lessons and sometimes cooperated in orchestral projects. He liked to be drawn into classical music as well as play in *latin* ensembles and the tango orchestra. It was all there at the conservatoire. As a jazz violinist he could not take part in many different jazz ensembles, so Oene was glad to be in a conservatoire with various disciplines. "Not in the least the social context, I played with such different people and that was so interesting."

At the conservatoire Oene met Jasper Le Clercq, who studied the jazz violin as well and he became his fellow musician in the Zapp string quartet. "He was two years ahead of me, but he became my mate, and remained that until today."

Oene felt that at the conservatoire he immediately sought a broad education. "I sniffed and shopped in those different departments, studied composition and that felt good. That is still the case. I don't feel particularly a jazz musician. I love

improvising, but I am not a typical jazz musician. There are so many interesting things and I felt that at the conservatoire I was given the space to explore them."

'Shopping', learning by doing and being enterprising - already during the period at the conservatoire Oene became a member of the Zapp string quartet. "They existed already, but at that time under the name of *Pop Strings*, playing pop music during receptions. That developed and for me it became the most important vehicle for writing and arranging."

Towards the end of his study, Oene started to feel nervous about his future. "I realised that soon I would graduate and felt the pressure of the question 'Am I going to make it? And how?' I was already developing my own pathway through my own choices and I realised that I would have to take my own steps."

At the conservatoire there were incidental courses about preparing for the business and marketing side of the profession but Oene did not take them. "I was not into that. I just wanted to improve my instrumental skills and my composing. I had to find out all about those things much later, but sorting these things out on your own is not bad, I think."

Looking back at the period at the conservatoire

Oene feels positive when looking back, although he had difficult moments during his study. "It was really hard to combine the two studies. Actually it is nearly impossible to do the two things well. Composition is such a broad area; at a certain moment I really felt more like a player and I had to make my choices." One of the things he liked most at the conservatoire was meeting people who were adventurous musicians, as he was himself.

He feels that the most important things he learned are a combination of many things. "Actually I think I enlarged my toolbox. In counterpoint, playing the violin, in ensembles, in groups I steered myself, in improvisation. I integrated everything I learned again in my composing. I felt challenged and there was space to be challenged."

Oene cannot say whether the period at the conservatoire reflected what was in store for him in the future. "Immediately after graduation I got an extremely busy life, switching from this to that, where at the conservatoire you are in an environment where you can consider things as you are not on the stage every evening." But he learned to deal with that.

Building up a multi-layered career

After graduation in 1997 Oene moved to Amsterdam, where he started to live together with his partner Irene. He began to play as a *sideman* in several groups of jazz and improvised music. "So I did not start as a bandleader, which gave me the opportunity to work with many different musicians and be part of the stage circuit. Playing in all these different groups helped me to discover many

things; I did not profile myself as a soloist, but as someone playing in groups. For example, for a period I had a group with Mark Haanstra, Wiek Hijmans and my cousin David Kweksilber[5], called *Mosaic*. That was a group which combined chamber music, jazz and rock - a kind of middle area. The group does not exist anymore. That is normal, groups come and go. Playing in such groups has been important, as well as writing for them. I feel that that has been very important for my development."

Oene learned a lot as a sideman and gained many influences through projects he was involved in. Examples were playing with Benoit Delbecq, a French pianist who plays conceptual contemporary jazz, and also Indian music, and especially rhythmic structures from it. Or playing in a section with three wind instruments and having to learn to mix instrumental timbres and colours. "Playing with African musicians puts you in a totally different context from playing contemporary music or totally free improvisations. All that became part of my toolbox, and was then transformed in my own compositions and arrangements."

Oene worked hard and did an incredible number of different things. Until recently he was a member of the Wereldband (World band), a theatrical multi-instrumentalist band that is very successful. He toured in India three times in 2002 and 2003 with the bands *Bhedam* and *Osmosis,* met Indian musicians on these occasions and worked with them. Afterwards he studied Indian music in depth in Amsterdam with Rafael Reina, in order to be able to use Indian music theory. "But I can have the same experience with African musicians; as soon as I play with them they influence me as well."

A lot of things are currently important to him, like working with guitarist Anton Goudsmit and pianist Jeroen van Vliet, and a forthcoming tour with flamenco guitarist Eric Vaarzon Morel. "I regard him as a fantastic musician, we have thirty concerts together and I will be looking forward to the growth of the process between us."

There are quite a few new plans and commissions for compositions, both for his own groups and for others: "I am going to write for the harp player Godelieve Schrama and singer Charlotte Riedijk, on texts of Judith Herzberg. For *Zapp*, for the percussionist Arnold Marinissen, a lot of things." Many of Oene's commissions are supported by the Dutch foundation for composers.[6]

Oene feels that his composition assignments have been influential for his artistic growth. "I got them from festivals, from the North Sea Jazz Festival last year, and several other commissions for ensembles." Oene was the first winner of the Deloitte Award, a prestigious jazz prize, and won several other prizes, like the Dutch Jazz Competition in 2001 with the group *On the Line* and in 2000 the Jur Naessens prize with the group *Mosaic*. It stimulated him enormously.

Reflection

"Sometimes I feel that the fact I like to do so many different things might be my weak point, and then I feel the need to focus more, in order to find out where I should go or where things are moving to. For a long time I thought that it was really the most important issue in life to do big things. At a certain moment I was in a studio in Paris with well-known American jazz musicians. I was the only Dutchman there, it felt so great. Now it is different. It is important to feel that you want to do big things but I find it more important to experience depth. Currently I do a lot of yoga, because I want to keep recharging my battery. I like to learn, and sometimes I find it refreshing to learn from outside the context of music."

At present Oene finds himself in a period where he is reflecting about his artistic pathway and the direction it should take. He feels that it is important to give this some time. "It became kind of extreme. It kept going on and on. I was playing contemporary music and at the same time I had started this *World Band* together with some friends. That was a theatre band, in which everyone played several instruments and with a lot of humour involved. At some point it was very successful; we played 100 times per year in the theatre, German *Schlager* parodies, Chinese operas, hard rock, whatever. It was fun, but I had to step out; it was way too much. I know that in *Zapp* I find the things I like the most in music coming together. I was so used to this drive of 'everything must go on'. To keep thinking over what I want to play in one and a half years and in which genres is exasperating. Now I take a bit of time for that. In the last few months I sometimes felt it became too much for me. You can't continue reinventing the wheel. I have got to make choices, which is difficult because there are so many things I like. It also involves a lot of organisation. Sometimes I think: 'do I want to keep organising or do I want to just take up my instrument now, and not consider anything else for a while?'"

The Zapp String Quartet

Playing in the Zapp Quartet is a clear choice for Oene. The Zapp String Quartet, consisting of Jasper le Clercq, violin, Friedmar Hitzer, violin and viola, Oene, viola and violin and Emile Visser, cello, has changed over the years from a pop ensemble into an improvising ensemble. "In the period of study at the conservatoire it was helpful in order to pay your rent, but after that it kept developing into an ensemble that is multi-layered, influenced by many styles and genres, and using a lot of improvisation." Oene plays the viola in the quartet although he studied the violin. He enjoys doing it because he likes the register and colours of the viola. In this combination of musicians the Zapp quartet has been together for eight years.

Today the quartet specialises in playing improvised music, jazz, rock, ethnic music, contemporary music and all kinds of combinations of these styles. The classical string quartet tradition is organically interwoven in it. The Zapp quartet

adds its own *groovy* way of playing and percussion techniques to it, which enables it to sound like a heavy rock band, a Bulgarian folk group or a bebopping jazz band as well.

All the members have a background as an improviser and they all compose or arrange music for the quartet. "There are many ways of making room for improvisation. Sometimes it is quite free and done by all of us, sometimes it is done by one musician. There can be a clear harmonic or melodic given, having to do with the structure of the piece. It can be anything. The frames can be built up from rhythmic, harmonic or melodic cells with which we improvise, or like in jazz from chords, or a combination of all of these. What we like in particular is to have a written framework, where we can build things in and where there is a collective space in which all of us have to model a piece that has to do with what pops up in your mind in that particular moment, but that at the same time has a clear link with the written material. Every evening it can be different of course."

> Here is an example of how we can work with *Zapp*. It is my composition *Rapide et Lent*. It starts with a simple rhythmic motif. I know that I will start with *this* note, and that the violin will start with *that* note. Then the viola is going to move around this certain melodic area, and the cello starts improvising and harmonies emerge, but what we keep going is the rhythm. At a certain moment the 2nd violin comes in a free role and at some point we know that we all move to the note G. We watch, a *cue* comes, and then we play this theme, which is a little bit of Vivaldi in a strange way. That is a typical example of 'I hear something, it sounds like Vivaldi, like *The Seasons*, but it is different.' When composing this my image is quite vague but while writing it down I think 'ah, this is what it is going to be' And here it clearly continues in a short chordal structure, that has a clear melodic line. The chords are filled in by the cello and viola, in a free role. In this section I am going to improvise and the others accompany it. But it can go every way. I want to be surprised, it can become *rock like*, anything. In short, we like this way of creating space with a few simple basic ingredients. We don't want to establish things like 'when A plays, B will do that', we want it to remain open and dynamic.

The Zapp quartet has no leader in particular: "Jasper and I are the instigators and we compose the majority of the pieces." The Zapp quartet just did a project called *Passaggio,* with work of composers who write on the cutting edge of improvised music, jazz and chamber music. One of the composers is Guus Janssen and compositions of Ernst Reijseger, Jasper Le Clercq and Oene himself are also among them. The ensemble recorded the pieces in September 2005 and is currently still touring with the programme. In December 2005 the Zapp String Quartet got a prize

of the *Kersjes van de Groenekan Foundation*, consisting of 50.000 euro, enabling them to work out new ideas during the next three years. Oene finds that very stimulating.

He feels one has to think ahead with such an ensemble. "The Amsterdam Jazz Agency deals with our bookings, but mostly things happen by coincidence. We never worked full-time as a quartet, but now there is a point where we want to do more with the group. So we hope to play more outside the Netherlands. This summer we will tour in Canada for two weeks, and the summer after that we have been invited to a festival in Massachusetts."

Artistic influences - learning and growth

"I play the violin and viola, but I don't feel like a violinist or violist. In the first place I see myself as a musician. I love wind instruments, I also play percussion, I learned it myself. I play violin and viola in all kinds of environments and contexts. The use of the two is reasonably in balance. In certain music the violin has a better opportunity for sound projection, especially with percussion. In a string quartet I think the viola can have a unique role, it can have a lot of space. I have always listened a lot to wind players in order to inform my improvisation in jazz. I love the sounds of wind in improvised music, especially their phrasing. Musicians like Wayne Shorter and pianist Jozef Dumoulin inspire me. I don't think I play my instrument so violin-like. I love to play my instrument in a percussive way, and sometimes more like a guitar. Bach and Bartók are for me big discoveries and influences. Bach's aesthetic, how it sounds. It is so clearly structured and at the same time it is full of fantasy and emotion. It is all there. Bartók's string quartets have both earth and air. His music can be down to earth and at the same time be a fantasy world of its own. It is hard to describe. But that is what I find thrilling. That is also why with *Zapp* I am often in an 'in between' area. I think that by nature I am looking for cutting edges, finding building blocks of many different influences. Someone like Guus Janssen, the composer and pianist, has a similar approach. I find that enormously inspiring and interesting. Playing with him is a challenge as he is such a quick thinker. Playing with Anton (Goudsmit, RS) is also wonderful; it is all about expression and *groove*. But sometimes there are projects that need to be quickly done, with short rehearsals, never going deep, and so they do not satisfy me."

Oene learns mostly from daily practice. "It is a kind of interesting exchange; other musicians come with compositions, material, which we play and consider, analyse and give feedback. Playing together and listening to each other is for me a wonderful way to learn. That generates a constant exchange of information and energy with your fellow musicians. I like that and it can influence you once you are back at work at home again. When you write you can feel that you have been influenced and see what you can in turn do with that."

Composing is never the same process for Oene. "Sometimes it starts with hearing a shape of a form in my mind and I can determine what the structure is going to be. Or I consider a rhythm and its relationship to a certain number and its proportions. Or any another ingredient can be at hand. In short, the composition process can be very intuitive, and at other times, very structured. In fact, it is always a combination of the two."

The musicians Oene writes for are important for him as knowing who they are helps to give a sense of direction to his composing. "I am not the kind of composer who writes not bothering who will be playing it. The performers are important, critical even. When I write for the pianist Jozef Dumoulin or for David (Kweksilber, RS), I know that I can write so that it crackles and *grooves* but I also know that I can exploit the chamber music side. The better musicians improvise, the less I write down. So for me it is of great importance to have a good relationship and a feel for the musicians I write for."

Oene considers that at moments when musicians feel the need to talk, this means that things haven't gone well enough. "But it depends *how* the talking goes, it can be a creative exchange of ideas, a combination of talking, listening, playing and experiencing."

He typifies himself as a musician who is "a seeker, looking for adventurous musical situations. I like to build things and to take risks. At the moment when things really go well I can enjoy it enormously and music can give me a big *drive*." He feels that he is where he is because he has always been so 'cocky' to follow his intuition and pursue his pathway with an independent mind. "I have never decided to make a certain statement through making a particular piece of music. What I do just happens."

Oene learns from big composition assignments and projects: "how to shape the whole process. How to prepare, how to bring this to the different groups involved, how to get the best out of everyone involved. Especially projects where you have more than just one role, often asking a lot of energy and social skills."

He finds the places where he plays important, but more important is the communication with the audience and the musicians playing with him. He considers communication to be the most important part of music. "The audience must understand what is happening on the stage and feel that it is honest. Whether there is a beautiful aesthetic or an ugly one, whether risks are taken. But it must be exciting, and outspoken. When there is a good communication with the audience you feel it as a musician. There must be a feeling of exchange, of freedom."

Oene is very satisfied with the fact that he has always played, and still does, with good musicians with whom he can communicate well.

Required skills

Oene feels that he can manage a lot, out of enthusiasm and passion. "But I find it

much easier to make a request from an artistic view to a fellow musician, rather than one from a marketing perspective, like I have to sell something. I do take initiative, also for *Zapp* where it concerns funding, but I don't like to handle financial negotiations. I don't like talking about money or considering how much one is worth. I don't want to discuss myself."

Oene had to learn organising, planning, making promotion material, dealing with buying out sums. "I knew I would have to learn it and I can still learn it better." He has enough income from his performing and composing, and feels that this is due to his artistic breadth and skills.

Continuing to learn is an issue. "I would like to develop further skills concerning sheer craftsmanship - like studying the work of Thelonius Monk, Indian music and chamber music - or just technique on my instrument. I feel that from time to time I have to go back to my foundation. Doing yoga is helpful for that."

Relationship between life and career span - longer term ambitions

"My life span and my career span are inseparable, since I made the choice for a profession in music. Now I come at a moment where I try to step back for a bit and think it over. As I said before, I don't want my life and career to be too fragmented, I need to consider my focus points. I feel that I am too fragmented in moments when I don't have enough time to go in-depth into things. I am a perfectionist, not in an exaggerated way, but I like to dive into certain issues. There can still be diversity, as long as the main lines are clear."

Oene feels that in the longer term *Zapp* should become his main activity. And he wants to write more for small ensembles. "They are so flexible, chamber music like, the details that are possible, the fine-tuning and on the other hand having a lot of *swing* and power."

He would like more to tour internationally with *Zapp*. "I want to be more directive in my choice for touring. Not just touring because it is an opportunity to travel, but because the group is artistically and socially so interesting, and because the music we make is so good."

Changes in the professional world

Oene finds that there are less and less jazz stages. That leads to a feeling of discontinuity. It is difficult to gain audiences, and for many ensembles it is hard to get a living. He sees that times are changing but it does not worry him personally.

He finds it hard to answer the question whether the work or the profession has changed: "I have always determined the rules of the game myself. There was never anything expected from me which I couldn't fulfil, at least within my own possibilities."

His mind goes on: "I would like in the future to develop things with other disciplines involved as well, like dance and theatre. I also love mime. Theatre is

beautiful because it plays with fantasy and image in a very conscious way. But those plans are still quite vague."

Interview held May 10, 2006 in Amsterdam

1 Comparable to grammar school.
2 Comparable to the current master's study.
3 Nearly highest grade, meaning 'very good'.
4 Comparable to a bachelor's examination.
5 Haanstra is a bass guitarist, Hijmans a jazz guitarist and Kweksilber a saxophonist and clarinettist.
6 In Dutch: Fonds voor de Scheppende Toonkunst.

David Kweksilber

The versatile musician David Kweksilber (1973) studied saxophone with Leo van Oostrom and clarinet with Pierre Woudenberg at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague, where he graduated in 1998 and 2000 with distinctions and a prize. He subsequently studied clarinet with Charles Neidich in New York and also took private lessons with different jazz musicians. David performs as a soloist and as a chamber music player with ensembles like the Ebony Band, the Schoenberg Ensemble, Asko Ensemble and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, but also with the New Cool Collective Big Band, his own 'Kwektet' and as a duo with the composer/pianist Guus Janssen. He received prizes for both his classical performances as well as for his improvised music. As a soloist he played in Europe, Russia and the USA. Maarten Altena, Gilius van Bergeijk and Guus Janssen wrote works for solo (bass) clarinet for him, which he recorded.

Each of us used to sit behind a piano and we would improvise together. It was very stimulating. The way I sat there with Michael Brozen, having the feeling to be free and that it did not need to comply with anything; it was fulfilling in the moment.

"The early hearing of music conditioned me", says David Kweksilber, son of a pianist and a singer, "my parents and their musicality were the big inspiration and formative forces." David was born in Amsterdam on February 12, 1973. His mother, Marjanne Kweksilber, performed a lot in concerts, singing different styles. Two years ago she ended her active stage career. His father, the pianist Ludwig Olshansky, is a USA citizen who has always lived alternately in Amsterdam and New York. David has a sister, Isadora, born in 1980, who read English literature at university and is currently engaged in making pop music.

Role of music in childhood and adolescence

Music played a central role at home: David became highly influenced by the music he heard his father practise, especially by Romantic composers like Schumann and Brahms, but also by what he heard his mother rehearse. From his fourth year on David played the accordion. How he came to play this instrument he does not remember anymore. He had a few years of lessons on the accordion and stopped at a certain moment in order to start playing the piano. Already at a young age he felt he wanted to do 'his own thing' and started to improvise.

When David was nine years old he went to New York for a year's stay with his parents and little sister. There he had piano lessons with Paul Scheftel, who was a study friend of his father from the Juilliard School. David remembers him as a 'humorous man who also wrote very humoristic music'. What made this teacher

extra special is the fact that he wrote piano study books for children. His method was very creative and led to sheer pleasure for David in piano playing. David describes Sheftel as 'a real lifelong learner'; the way he continuously extended his own creativity impressed him.

After his return from New York David got piano lessons at the community music school in Amsterdam. His teacher was Peter Kranen.

From the very start, having one's own sound and music was crucial for him. David started to improvise and as such he approached his piano studies as well. "I worked for about 10 minutes on a Chopin *Mazurka* and then I thought 'okay, now I know enough', and I continued improvising." Peter Kranen was not an improviser, so David did not share this with him. "Dreaming along in my own sound world, that's what it was about." His parents appreciated his improvisations and encouraged him. This was stimulating for him.

David's early heights in improvising took place whenever he was in New York and improvised with the, meanwhile deceased, composer Michael Brozen, a friend of his father. "Each of us used to sit behind a piano and we would improvise together. It was very stimulating. The way I sat there with Michael Brozen, having the feeling to be free and that it did not need to comply with anything; it was fulfilling in the moment."

From the age of twelve David got jazz saxophone lessons. His teacher was Jeldrik IJland. David thinks that he made the choice for saxophone because, again, he wanted to do something totally different than his parents, a thing for himself. He was also eager to play jazz. A favourite during the lessons was to play along, together with his teacher, with the recordings of Jamie Aebersold and his band. "There was a choice of different tempi, keys, there were recordings in major and minor (my favourite!) or with well-known jazz standards."

Tragically IJland fell ill and died of cancer when David was 17 years old and in the fifth grade of grammar school. Before he died Jeldrik IJland had advised David to take lessons with the saxophone player Leo van Oostrom. Leo van Oostrom then taught him one and a half years before he went to the conservatoire. "Leo said: 'we are going to make a classical saxophonist of you.'"

By this time David chose to become a professional musician because he could not imagine anything more rewarding than creating his own 'sound world' and being engaged in that. "I enjoyed what you could do with music: make something which enabled you to step outside yourself, something that was bigger than just you. Nothing being more fun than that."

He had no specific aims at that moment, just the wish to perform music together with good musicians. "I wanted both to play beautiful classical pieces and to improvise; unmitigated music-making." His parents were very encouraging in the choice for the music profession, although they did not force him at all. "My parents

gave me compliments, perhaps not always deserved, but always honestly meant. It gave me self-confidence."

Education at the conservatoire and after; learning environment and teachers
David started his study at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague in September 1991 in the saxophone class of Leo van Oostrom. After one year he started to play the clarinet as a secondary instrument, and after another year he took it up, besides the saxophone, as a principal study, with clarinettist Pierre Woudenberg. This choice was strongly prompted by the repertoire; it gave him the opportunity to play his much beloved Schumann and Brahms next to saxophone composers like Ibert and Glazounov. The fact that he would increase his chances in the labour market by learning another instrument was a stimulating side effect, but repertoire was the decisive factor.

David is very clear about his time at the conservatoire: "I came there for my teachers. I had and have an aversion to 'group mentality'. Actually I was lucky to play the saxophone; I did not need to be part of symphony orchestra groups. Music was something personal for me, I did not look for a lot of joining in. Anyhow, I already played with a lot of people. I could wander through the conservatoire as a soloist, so to speak."

David quickly finished his compulsory subjects and could 'play endlessly'. The formal world in the conservatoire did not bother him. He enjoyed performing in the first place, but he did find satisfaction in other subjects as well, especially in those which challenged him to use his ears.

His two teachers inspired him both. David describes his saxophone teacher Leo van Oostrom as special because he knows a lot about the history of the saxophone, about sound colours and styles. Having a broad framework of reference, recordings and instruments and also being active in improvised and modern classical music, Leo's interests fitted close to David's own. "This broad interest is his life. He had confidence in me and let me do my thing. Leo knew a lot and that was very inspiring, it was of great importance for the development of my sound world. Besides, I could mess about, everything came back to my own feeling of drive, discipline and enthusiasm." What appealed to David as well was Leo's point of departure about there being no absolute truth.

His clarinet teacher Pierre Woudenberg is described by David as the example of someone who is always in shape, who deals with the profession and his instrument in a disciplined way, and who certainly was a source of inspiration in a musical sense as well. In his view Pierre stands for a classical clarinettist who plays beautifully in a *no nonsense* way. "It challenged me to give enough attention to my own discipline."

David feels fortunate but thinks that in general it is important to have more emphasis in the conservatoire on the particular wishes and needs of the student in the principal study. "An open mind being stimulated and challenged, that is

important." He did very well in the conservatoire. In 1998 he graduated in saxophone, gaining his performing musician diploma[1] 'with distinction' and receiving the Nicolai prize of the Royal Conservatoire. In 2000 he earned his master's diploma for clarinet, also 'with distinction'.

A Jack-of-all-trades

After graduation David applied for scholarships and went to New York for a year in the season 2001 - 2002. He experienced this year as being very valuable. Amongst other things David took lessons with the clarinettist Charles Neidich and saxophone lessons with Al Regni. "I wanted to hear their ideas about playing a wind instrument and making sound. It is fascinating to hear different people's approaches. There are many skilled and interesting *Jack-of-all-trades* in New York. I came into contact with a bassoon player from the New York Philharmonic; he played clarinet in a Dixieland band, learned to play the saxophone and started to perform in the New York Saxophone Quartet. I appreciate people who do what they want and make these kinds of combinations. I like to stimulate students to pursue all their passions as well."

On the look-out for influences

David was trained as a classical performer but nevertheless developed into an inspired improviser as well. He learned it "by listening and by doing. The references inevitably came from many sides."

He regards both his teachers at the conservatoire as musically influencing, but in the first place his parents. Very strong was the notion of singing while music-making. "I experienced that this is true. The spontaneous effect of music-making was very close to me because of my mother's singing. When she sings you see and hear her telling something. It is not abstract, it is a story, because there is a text." David experienced his mother communicating through music and making contact with the audience.

His father is someone who practises patiently and in a reflective manner. David states that he himself does the same now. "I could wish to experience just the spur of the moment, but I do have to reflect on my Mozart concerto." He did not see his father as someone who practises like crazy, but as someone creating his own sound world: "it was a kind of soundtrack for my life."

David also had an abundance of artistic and creative impulses during the period at the conservatoire and in the year after graduating which he spent in New York. That was an amazing experience:

> From a classical teacher to Andy Statman, a *klezmer* clarinettist who actually started as a *blue grass* mandolin player and then got deeply into his Jewish

> roots, becoming the protégé of Dave Tarras, who was *the* klezmer immigrant clarinettist, and thus learned his style and subsequently used it as Coltrane played his jazz, very driven and with passion. This resulted in fabulous music with both Coltrane and Andy Statman, and that sound is in my baggage as well.

For David the musical worlds are not separated, even Statman and Coltrane's atmosphere can influence his classical performance; "Music is a *vibe* of the moment, a musical expression of and in that particular moment." Of course the stylistic means for playing Mozart are totally different. But nevertheless "when I am playing Mozart on the stage, I hope that it is as relaxed as possible and I hope to play with a comparably free mind."

Learning by listening and doing, trial and error

David learns in the first place by listening, to a concert, no matter if he likes it or not, or to himself. He also learns by 'trial and error', "Pierre (Woudenberg, RS) for example can have a certain point of view about a piece, I could have another colour in my head, but then I try it out and learn what is closest to myself." Sometimes he sits down with a score and listens to some recordings, but not often. Most of the times David learns intuitively, 'learning by doing' per concert. "Reflect on it during and after the concert; next time maybe different!" He claims to learn through everything he hears. "Every time I hear something I learn something."

David cannot tell if he is a real 'learner', although "I like to think that I am open to everything I hear." He does not consider himself a 'sleuth'; "I have a deep wish to perform what comes from myself, so I am not extremely active to investigate how else I could perform something. I do go to the Bimhuis[2] and the Concertgebouw to hear things, so a lot comes in and a lot happens, I always do something with it." He does not regard himself at present as very curious, although he used to be. "I have already seen and heard a lot. The most important thing for me is that at a certain moment I can let my audience hear *my* thing, so I am not extremely curious. But that could have a connection with the phase of my life. I don't care if this is to my credit or not, but it does no harm to be curious. I may now be speaking more about my social than about my musical spirit."

David is not engrossed in historic performance practice. "I am interested, if necessary and if I feel stimulated, when I know that it may bring me something musically very interesting. But I am not a scholar. Brüggen's interpretations are not always underpinned historically either; he also has his moods. I hope that I will be able to reach consensus about tempi with Thierry Fisher![3]"

Artistic learning from other musicians

Artistic learning, again, happened in the first place through his parents. "The

singing and the musicality coming from the piano were a big influence. Artistic learning is also about trial and error. I learned a lot from Leo (van Oostrom, RS) artistically, although not everything was my taste. My own framework was that I wanted my saxophone to be able to sound like anything from Dexter Gordon's to a classical string instrument to a voice." Learning from colleague musicians takes place 'every second' in the sense of: 'it appeals to me or not'. "When for example I hear Jacques Meertens[4] play, I hear him playing everything with authority. That appeals to me. When I listen to him I hear a certain character, in his tone, in his technique. I am always on the lookout for musical character. *Pesante*, *mezzo forte*, you can realise these characters in many different ways. I find that interesting."

David does not like lengthy debates with colleagues about interpretation. "What I want mostly is to play, I then hope that my colleagues open their ears wide in order to be free in developing something on that particular moment. Hence I am dependent on musicians who are not too stiff and biased, but who really want to feel free. You have to be lucky with each other's taste. The main thing I learn is that I hear someone make choices. That goes for Jacques Meertens as well. The worst thing you can experience in a musician's performance is not hearing him make choices."

Thinking about the question how he would describe himself as a musician David says, "I like to step on a stage and to start improvising without having prepared anything. I just hope then to bring something as compelling as can be the case with written music. I'm in pursuit of beautiful moments, searching for the moments that strike a right chord for me. On the listen-out. And furthermore: 'compartments' in music are redundant; they do not exist. That is just self-protection or a means of clipping one's wings. What does exist is the matter of taste." David is against working with musicians who play as they consider it 'proper' and hamper him to make music freely. "They can say 'if it had to be this way the composer would have written it down', or 'this very famous ensemble executes it in this way on the CD'. I want to work with musicians who do not hold on to that."

Improvising with pianist and composer Guus Janssen

A musician who gives the example of making choices and one David appreciates and is as such highly influential for him, is the pianist and composer Guus Janssen, with whom he improvises and forms a duo. "Guus has some different musical references from me but we also share a similar goal. We influence each other with great joy. I learn a lot from him. He underwent many influences, from jazz musicians he played with to church music."

David contacted him when he was invited to make a tour on the Dutch jazz stages in 2002. "I had several options, for example to do something *groovy* with klezmer influences with Benjamin Herman. That is something I do not want to do for a purely listening audience. I'd rather do that in a *New Cool Collective*[5] setting

where people can dance. Another wish was to play contemporary music in a classic jazz quartet chamber music formation. So I asked classical musicians, a pianist, bass player and a drummer, who also had an improvising (jazz, pop, free) background. I wanted the music to be written by contemporary composers and to include space for improvisation. Hence the cooperation with Guus emerged. It is enormously inspiring. We work together a few times a year, I always look forward to them."

They intend to give concerts in the autumn of 2005 and make a CD together. David thinks he will learn a lot in this period, because "I want to hear something on that CD that remains intriguing. I want to take care that I do not do something of which I know the musical follow-up in advance. I will succeed in that together with Guus because we are both pathfinders, we both explore."

The final result of the improvised music David makes with Guus will depend highly on the interaction between the two musicians. "You cannot escape yourself. A composer like Brahms thinks long, polishes, weighs, and creates something balanced. You cannot compare improvised music with that. Sometimes I ponder the musical value of improvisations when it sounds like a knack. There is always audience for it, by the way. This is something I must admit: sometimes you hear a solo and then you think: what is the value of this, when you compare it with the little jewels of Kurtag, on which he worked for a long time?" Improvising, realising art on the spot gives a big responsibility, David feels. "It can go marvellously, but it remains tricky."

Whenever he makes a CD David is very critical about the contents. "Some things I find fun, but they do not interest me enough to learn it fully. I would for example never play a lengthy *bebop* solo on a CD, because I'm not waiting for that, it is not close enough to my personal musical wishes."

Career development

David feels that thus far his career has developed organically, "I have never had to overstrain myself." Technical problems fortunately have never occurred. But "discipline is not my strongest point. That means that I do not always practise, with the result that I have to get back into shape." He realises that now, five years after graduation, he has entered a phase of his life in which he will have to make an effort in order to keep his career developing organically.

He felt quite well prepared for his career. Not so much by the formal offerings at the conservatoire, but he was lucky that his teacher Leo took him to gigs and brought him into contact with the world of ensembles. David was not prepared at the conservatoire in aspects of public relations, marketing, and organisational issues. After graduation at first this was not a problem because he got a lot of invitations. But he now wishes that entrepreneurship had been an issue at the conservatoire, 'in a flexible way, adapted to the wishes of the students.' David thinks that if he had learned about it, entrepreneurship might have already played a

more important role in his career development. He felt challenged by the many gigs that came along, "where I could sound my own voice and could determine the programmes myself."

David plays on a regular basis in the *New Cool Collective*. It is not a big source of income. The work in the New Cool Collective becomes more sporadic, because a jazz big band is expensive to book. The duo with Guus Janssen is also on an incidental basis, depending on demand and offer. Next to this David plays on a freelance basis regularly in the *Schoenberg Ensemble*, the *Asko Ensemble* and the *Ebony Band*.

Until this very moment he chooses to be a freelance musician, and not to be a regular member of an orchestra ("it has never been part of my world, so I never had that ambition") or ensemble ("unless something very interesting comes by"), so in his view the kind of skills mentioned previously are of great importance.

He realises clearly that he finds himself in a pivotal period in his career: "I know that I will not play in the series of 'Young Dutch Talents' for the rest of my life. Until now everything went very relaxed, I have always been broadly interested and able to get along easily. That may not always be the case. I know now by experience that you have to organise in order to get things going." He realises that he will have to take initiatives, go after subsidies, write to concert halls. "I know how to do that, but it could have influenced me earlier and been in my system already if attention had been given to these issues at the conservatoire."

Teaching

For some time David has assisted Leo van Oostrum as a teacher at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague. "His broad interest coincides well with my interest. I share his approach to playing the saxophone, issues about embouchure and control of the instrument. I was pleased that Leo asked me, but at the same time I thought 'I don't like teaching Bozza and Françaix, I want Brahms and Schumann'; so actually I also want to teach the clarinet!" David likes teaching very much, especially the aspect of sharing his enthusiasm; "I will never be a teacher who preaches the absolute truth, but I'll be stimulating you to engage in your own thing."

He finds that he learns much from teaching. "In the first place 'to practice what you preach'. You hear a lot, so again it is always about 'does it appeal to me or not'. I enjoy the art of teaching: building things up together, having patience, being creative in finding the right words. Students don't have the same frame of reference which you have, like I had my parents." Reference is a pivotal issue in teaching for David: "That is where you find your material and vocabulary. You must stimulate people to find and explore the references that contribute to their artistic development as a musician. Hence I find it difficult to make decisions about admitting someone to the conservatoire or not: how do you hear if and how much someone will develop? That is an enormous challenge."

The future

At present David finds himself considering his future, his short-term and long-term goals. "I have a lot of invitations, but I am realistic about it. It can change. They can also ask somebody else instead of you. This autumn I will work with Guus Janssen. I want to do as much as possible with that duo. I often ask myself why I don't have the ambition to play in Carnegie Hall. I played in the chamber music hall and the big hall of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, so that happened. But do I want that at any price? I am also a dreamer; I just want to do my thing. What I think about is that I enjoyed things coming my way, not organising them myself, and being busy. But if I want to continue in this way, I must start making it happen. Do I want to play Mozart and Gilius van Bergeijk in New York? I have no deep wishes to be all over the newspapers. My love for playing is not a wish for fame. I am now confronted with new steps and choices. What is there to find within my own ambition? I like assisting Leo, but I would also like to give clarinet lessons. I do not need to teach in a conservatoire by any means, but what do I want by all means?"

Financially David can cope until now, but he lives together with a partner and "I do not (yet) have a family to keep, but I need to earn money." Choices are difficult. David finds he will choose for his enthusiasm. He relates to the fact that the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra had an audition for bass clarinet. Colleagues approached him, but he hesitated. "In the end I did not do it. It is not my thing. But how will I think about that in ten years time? Perhaps I'll regret not having taken for granted the group dynamics I do not favour as long as it is only for a few days a week? This job does not come again!" David realises that how you look at yourself changes over the years: "I now tend to say 'no' to things to which I said 'yes' ten years ago, but I can't say no to the cash register in the supermarket."

Coping

"I am very satisfied with the fact that everything went so smoothly until now. It gives a good feeling to be asked. I am pleased about the fact that I play both with Guus Janssen and Gerard Bouwhuis[6] and in a concert of Bella Davidovich as well. I want it to remain like that. On the other hand: I need to stand on my own two feet, because this will not go on forever. How do I want to do that? How do I realise that?"

The least satisfied David is "with sometimes having to play with musicians who are short-sighted, saying 'this is impossible'. That is a narrow-minded attitude." David realises that you cannot change people. "I am 32 and my colleagues are not 18 either." In practice he makes choices, realising that he has to be flexible and adaptive. He finds it can be hard to negotiate sometimes. "A short while ago I 'saved' a situation during a project, but at that moment it cost me my own feeling of freedom. I was having negative feelings during the concert instead of feeling relaxed and positive with my colleagues." It need not always be like that. "Gerard

Bouwhuis and I also have different views and different strong points. But we can discuss them jokingly."

Reflecting on his career development David feels that "I am where I am right now because I have self-confidence; I feel at ease both in the Bimhuis and the Concertgebouw. I'm also where I am because I am not someone who was self-absorbed and really 'took care' of myself. That is because basically I am lazy and want to be asked for what I do. I have this aversion against being an entrepreneur for myself, promoting myself. I am glad that I feel at home in different musical worlds at the same time. Other people are more used to generating their work than I am, that is also why I am not always terribly busy."

Changes in the cultural environment

David clearly sees changes in the labour market. "There is less money. You sense that as a freelancer in the ensembles: there are less big projects. Also the stages and concert halls have less money to realize interesting concerts."

Looking back at the first five years after graduation

Many informative situations have occurred for David: "I learned in many different disciplines. Playing together with colleagues, classical music, improvised music, with conviction and all the means you have at hand to make the most of the music. I learned in the symphony orchestras how things work in an orchestra. I learned in the New Cool Collective how to make an entertaining show and keep the energy alive in a set for a dancing audience, I learned how to get people to dance. I learned what many different things you can do in a solo. I learned to perform chamber music on a silent stage: how to concentrate and think of nothing except of the song you are singing. I learned different things in different places. I learned many things I love!"

Music was and is always central to his life. "It is the greatest pleasure and a retreat in ups and downs. It is always about the making of a world of sound, about character and atmosphere. It gives a wonderful feeling to create something, to go beyond yourself. It is the thing I prefer doing most as a human being. And for me creating is music-making."

David finds there is also space for other things in his life besides music. "But music is always there and it is my thing. I can go for weeks without practising. Music is just always with me."

In the end

"I feel most comfortable with people who say: 'This is what I do and for me it works'; there is no absolute truth. When I teach I want people to listen well to themselves, in order not to become a clone of someone else. There is no absolute

truth. You might want to harvest compliments by staying in the tradition; there is something for everyone, but that is not for me."

Interview held June 15, 2005 in Amsterdam

1 Currently called a master's degree.
2 Amsterdam's most important jazz stage.
3 Thierry Fisher leads the Radio Chamber Orchestra on February 4, 2006, in the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, when David plays the Mozart clarinet concerto and a newly written concert by the composer Gilius van Bergeijk.
4 Solo clarinettist of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra.
5 Big Band of which David is a member.
6 A well-known Dutch pianist, mainly engaged in modern music.

Berdien Vrijland

Violist Berdien Vrijland was born in 1973 in Leiden, in a musical family. At the age of six she started playing the violin and when she was sixteen years old she switched to viola. At the age of fourteen Berdien moved with her family to Groningen, where she finished secondary school. During her youth Berdien played in a number of youth orchestras, which she enjoyed very much. She started studying the viola at the Rotterdam Conservatoire in 1991 and in 1994 switched to the Amsterdam Conservatoire where she studied with Marjolein Dispa. She received her diploma 'teaching musician' in 1999 and her second phase diploma[1] in 2001. During her studies Berdien had several inspirational experiences, like playing in the Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra under Claudio Abbado and taking part in the Tanglewood Festival in the USA. In 2002 Berdien was appointed tutti violist in the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra in Amsterdam. She has a 75 % job, which allows her to combine her work in the orchestra with playing chamber music.

Someone's age is no issue for me. I meet older musicians who are totally enthusiastic and younger musicians who appear to have gone to sleep.

Berdien Vrijland was born in 1973 in Leiden in a musical family; her father, being originally a neurologist and later taking up management positions in the medical world, played the French horn throughout his life and her mother started studying the cello at the conservatoire when Berdien was six years old. Berdien's mother graduated and then took up a teaching practice. The family consists of three children; a brother, Niels, who is two years older and Janneke, a sister, who is two years younger than Berdien. Berdien is the only child of the family who chose a professional life in music.

Music in childhood and adolescence

Berdien spent her childhood in Leiden and there was always a lot of music at her home. Her father played (and still plays) in a woodwind quintet, which has existed for forty years, and she heard her mother play the cello in a string quartet quite often.

At the age of six Berdien started to play the violin, her sister Janneke would follow and her brother Niels played the cello. Berdien cannot remember whether it was her own choice to play the violin, but she is certain that it was not forced upon her. She calls playing the violin during childhood 'a sort of a duty'. "I had a hate-and-love affair with practising and playing the violin. It went easy; I could do it well. But I had not the intrinsic motivation to play it from my own initiative. My parents needed to put me on the track daily. Once I started playing the violin, I liked it."

Berdien got private lessons at the Leiden music school from Paulien Zondag, which she liked. She describes Ms. Zondag as a kind woman, who worked in a quiet and stimulating way with her pupils. Ms. Zondag used to organise many things in ensemble and orchestral playing. Her lessons were structured and reliable, including the certainty that the children would obtain sweets.

Berdien also has good memories of music at primary school, where there was a music teacher who wrote songs, and organised musicals every year. There was also a choir, in which she sang. She played a lot of music in primary school, often together with friends who played instruments as well.

After four years of lessons with Paulien Zondag, Berdien and her sister Janneke got another violin teacher, Henny Brier, with whom she would stay for another four years, until, when she was fourteen years old, the family moved to Groningen. Henny Brier was much stricter than Ms. Zondag. "I had to work hard; she was very demanding. I did not like her that much, nor did my sister. I worked hard, but I often had the feeling that it was not good enough. Sometimes I surprised her by playing something very beautifully. That is how it worked with me, and it still does, it is of no use forcing me into things. Once I start liking something immensely myself, like a piece or a study, I will really want to show quality." Nevertheless Berdien acknowledges Henny Brier now as a good teacher.

Berdien feels that the role of music in her childhood and adolescence was very important. "I have always loved it. I played in so many ensembles and youth orchestras and both musically and socially this was very satisfying. When I was twelve years old I went to Germany with the orchestra of the Leiden music school for the first time. Together with a girlfriend I stayed with a guest family, and of course we did not speak German at all."

Berdien played in many youth orchestras together with her brother and sister. She was proud of her mother, who worked hard to obtain her conservatoire diploma as a cellist, and felt inspired by all the music she heard at home. "Although I sometimes hated the fact that there was always classical music playing at home, I think it influenced me a lot, also in terms of taste."

When she was twelve years old Berdien went to the Atheneum[2], at the Rijnland Lyceum in Oegstgeest. When she was fourteen her father was appointed director of the Academic Hospital in Groningen and the whole family moved to Groningen. Meanwhile her mother had graduated at the Rotterdam Conservatoire as a cellist and was building up a private practice in Leiden, which she then had to start over in Groningen.

Berdien went to another Atheneum, the St. Maartens College in Groningen. She also started playing in two orchestras, among which the Haydn Youth String

Orchestra, which was very important for her. "This orchestra might very well have been the incentive for me to choose music as my profession. We played such good repertoire, we had many concerts, I met young musicians there who were really fanatical and through whom I felt challenged. I started realising that music gave something extra to my life."

Sometimes there was music-making together at home, which would either be fun or end in a row. But with her sister Janneke Berdien made a lot of music.

Berdien looks back on her youth with a lot of satisfaction, especially at the period in Leiden. "In Groningen I also had a good time, but sometimes I was too distracted, I took sailing lessons and hockey lessons, and there were many parties. We lived in the centre of the city so I went out till 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, not being such a laborious and obedient child." Berdien's father was working hard, got too much stress at his work and nearly had a *burn out*. Her mother was anxious to build up a new career, so Berdien feels she was left too much on her own, which resulted in her not being guided enough in her school work and in her violin practising. "It was quite a chaotic time, which I don't blame my parents for, because I find it normal that they both wanted to have their own careers." Her father's problems in the job put quite some pressure on the family and at some point he took another job in Heemstede, and started commuting. The result of her 'free life' was that Berdien did not pass her third year at the Atheneum, and had to do it over again. One year later she switched to another school type, the HAVO.[3] She feels that, although the situation at home was sometimes explosive, she had a really happy childhood: "Those things happen, both parents in demanding careers, three children in puberty, that was inescapable."

In Groningen Berdien got violin lessons with the violinist Jan Repko, who at that time was a teacher at the Groningen Conservatoire. Initially she liked it, although he was very severe. For three years she stayed with him, until it did not work out anymore. "From him I learned that playing the violin is very difficult, and that you have to work hard at it. I had to practise three hours a day. That was a lot, but it was good for me. I learned a lot about technique, scales, and studies. I got a really good basis, which is important at that stage and things like playing by heart go easy at that age. Playing the violin went well, but Jan and I did not have such a good relationship. He tried to reach me, but I was quite emotionally closed at that age. I did practise, but my violin was not an outlet for me. It was just finished between us."

Berdien then took lessons with Boukje Gerritsma, a violinist in the North Netherlands Orchestra and she started to play the viola in this period as well. She liked the lessons and felt more at ease with a female teacher.

Taking up the viola

Berdien's father had bought a viola, with the idea of learning to play it himself; it would enable him to play chamber music for strings with his family. No doubt due to a lack of time it did not happen. Berdien used to play the viola occasionally. At a certain moment her mother's pianist heard her play the viola and complimented her on her playing, saying that it sounded really well.

"He said that this instrument fitted me quite well, and then I suddenly realised that actually I felt the same. I used to think that playing the viola would be less fun than the violin, but once I started playing it, I liked the feel of it, the space the sound has, the warm low notes. Actually, I was sold for the viola pretty quickly." By that time Berdien was seventeen years old.

Choosing music

In 1991 Berdien received her HAVO diploma. Where she had at first considered returning to the Atheneum to obtain this diploma as well, she now hesitated, because music became more and more important. "I started thinking about the profession once I started playing the viola. People from the music world told me that as a violist one is quite employable. And it is a very special instrument, I liked the music written for it."

Berdien was advised to seek contact with the viola pedagogue Gisella Bergman, who at that time taught at the Rotterdam Conservatoire, to play for her. Gisella was very enthusiastic and this resulted in the fact that, after obtaining her HAVO diploma, Berdien went to the preparatory class of the Rotterdam Conservatoire, trying to combine it with some subjects of the Atheneum, which turned out to be no success; music was pulling too strong. She continued to live at home in Groningen, that year, and commuted.

Having all the good experiences in youth orchestras Berdien had been part of during her childhood, she was quite certain that she wanted to become an orchestral musician. "I was certain that I wanted to play in an orchestra, preferably of course the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. I liked the idea of playing in an orchestra, but I was keen on having a proper job as well." By that time she played in the National Youth Orchestra and the Netherlands Youth Orchestra and realised that she wanted to belong to 'the top'.

"I wanted to be able to go to the conservatoire easily, really to belong there, because of a level that was more than sufficient. I often used to wonder whether I played well enough." She feels that Gisella Bergman gave her confidence. "It is important that your teacher believes in you. On the other hand it is also important that your teacher is totally honest with you. I have seen too often that students could not cope, and that conservatoires did not want to send them away or advise them to stop their studies. That is wrong, and not to the advantage of the student."

Berdien liked the lessons with Gisella Bergman. "I learned a lot about the viola repertoire. But I felt that nor she, nor my later teacher Marjolein Dispa paid much attention to basic technical issues compared to my former teacher Jan Repko."

From the Rotterdam to the Amsterdam Conservatoire

After her preparatory year in Rotterdam, Berdien got offered another preparatory year in Rotterdam, in order to establish a solid basis for her viola studies. Meanwhile she could start with first year theory subjects, which was an advantage. From 1991 till 1994 she was a student in Rotterdam, but after her first official study year Berdien decided to go to the Amsterdam Conservatoire. Not so much because she wanted to leave her teacher, but because the climate in Amsterdam, both at the conservatoire and the international cultural climate in the city, attracted her.

Berdien did an audition in Amsterdam, and was again placed in the first year. Her teacher was Marjolein Dispa. "I was lucky, because, together with the three years in Rotterdam, in total I got ten years for my study."

Berdien experienced the period at the Amsterdam Conservatoire as very good, safe and at the same time demanding and challenging. "It is hard work, you can get really nervous, and there was also the feeling of competition. It is also safe, because you just practise and do not worry about a job yet. On the other hand it is a strange feeling not to know what is going to happen to you. I remember that vividly. I was quite sure that I wanted to play in an orchestra once I graduated, but somehow at the conservatoire I got the feeling that students and teachers looked down on that profession. There was this idea that it would be so uninspiring, whereas I saw it as a wonderful job, which would give you the opportunity to work part-time, doing other things in addition. I still feel that way. I also could not imagine how realistic all this thinking was. 'How are you going to earn your money then?' I used to think."

The orchestra nevertheless remained her chosen pathway. During her studies Berdien played in the *Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra* which she found highly inspiring; the young musicians who played there were all very motivated. Another very motivating experience for her was the summer she spent in Tanglewood, at the festival of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. "We played chamber music and in orchestras, with world famous conductors like Osawa and Abbado."

Berdien's pathway in Amsterdam

Berdien liked the lessons of Marjolein Dispa. "I have always regarded her as a kind of coach; she really guided people in their development. In the first year she was very strict about what you had to play, about fingerings, bowing, teaching me everything that she knew herself. I learned a lot, and I also played many studies. Later, from the third year on, she would leave me more on my own, trying to encourage my independence, in order to find my own style. She really taught me to

think, how do I want this or that, how do I listen to myself? How to determine which fingerings you use and how you will cope with a certain type of music?"

In some ways Marjolein was a role model for Berdien: "The way she worked, the fact that she worked so hard, the way she thought about music, and was interested in recordings and in visiting concerts." Berdien liked her teacher, as well as the class and the repertoire.

Berdien felt inspired by the world of the conservatoire and many other friends served as examples as well. "I met so many really talented musicians at the conservatoire, who already played beautifully at a very young age. I think I was talented as well, but I mainly strived to be thorough; although I hate the word, I would not know a better one to describe it. I felt wonderful in chamber music. I noticed that I am a flexible player and that I am fast, but that by nature I am not a principal violinist. I am a real violist, who feels well in harmonies and is on her musical guard in that. I felt inspired and musically I felt in the right place. Going along and letting yourself be inspired, occasionally having the melody or a solo line in between, but not being the leading voice. It is wonderful that this little layer of top level exists, but I have never wanted a solo career for myself."

Preparation for the future

Berdien had orchestral practice, taught by the principal violist of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. The students worked on orchestral excerpts that are demanded at auditions. She learned a lot from this teacher. "Lately I went to a concert with Bruckner, conducted by Haitink, and I saw this violist playing. I realised that I found him the best of all violists sitting there." What was remarkable though, was that this teacher was very negative to his students about playing in an orchestra.

At the conservatoire Berdien played a lot in a string quartet and also, at some point, she got gigs in the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra and in the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. It gave her an ambivalent feeling: "On the one hand I was inspired to move in such an international music world and on the other hand I kept wondering whether I would be successful in this world and acquire a job. I saw a lot of people who were talented, but who did not succeed. They were ambitious, did not reach their goal, and got major breakdowns. I have seen really terrible things."

There was definitely a feeling of competition in the conservatoire, but Berdien did not suffer from it. "As long as it is respectful, it can also be healthy; for me it worked as a challenge." Her self-confidence fluctuated. "Sometimes I felt well, sometimes I was too nervous, especially when my parents would come to listen to me. I was quite critical and demanding of myself; actually I still am."

Berdien missed education in self-promotion and the business side of the profession. She feels they are important skills to acquire. Occasionally there were

some workshops, but real tuition in those skills did not yet exist. Although she is pleased that during the period of her studies she had a lot of opportunities to play, she finds that the tuition in the conservatoire in orchestral playing is not good enough. "I think it would be really good to link the tuition more to the profession. You practise a lot of repertoire that you are never going to need in an orchestra. I think teachers should wake their students up. Playing in an orchestra was treated as a 'lesser choice' in the conservatoire, which is wrong. Because it is not realistic to think that you can earn a living playing chamber music alone. An orchestra just was not *hot*. But I was certain: I wanted to play in a good orchestra, preferably based in Amsterdam, or close to it." In the end it became the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra.

Berdien received her diploma 'teaching musician' in 1999 and her second phase diploma in 2001.[4] Also during the two years after 1999 she stayed with the same teacher, and she regretted this afterwards, thinking that she should have changed teachers or taken an exchange period at a conservatoire abroad. "There were no teachers in Amsterdam that I wanted to go to, and also I did not feel like leaving Amsterdam. I had nice gigs; I simply did not have the drive to do it. But nevertheless, the last two years did not bring me so much that was new."

Gaining a job by auditioning

After graduation Berdien played a lot in the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, which she enjoyed tremendously. She did a few auditions for the same orchestra, at the Broadcast and in Spain. None of them were successful. It did not worry her too much yet. Then in 2002 she decided to audition for the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra. "At that point I felt that I might consider giving up playing if I would not get this job." Fortunately she succeeded in obtaining the job, and since 2002 Berdien has been a member of the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra.

"Taking an audition is really demanding. Students should be much more prepared for it, and receive better training. I meet so many excellent musicians who simply are *not* able to do an audition. It is extremely difficult to audition, standing there totally on your own, playing orchestral parts for a jury consisting of respected musicians and conductors. Playing *Don Juan*[5] without even a piano. You are extremely nervous, because it is about getting a job or not. Moreover, a job you want very much, and you know that people are going to judge you to see whether you're good enough. I have always worked hard on controlling my nerves, because I knew I would not get a job otherwise."

Berdien worked at controlling her nerves in different ways. "I was very severe with myself, telling myself not to be nervous, I tried to analyse *why* I was nervous. I did breathing exercises. But what worked best for me is making sure that I am excellently prepared, so that I can play as freely as possible. I told myself that nerves are normal, but that they should not spoil things for me."

Berdien saw a lot of colleagues becoming angry and frustrated, because auditioning would not succeed. She does not know a solution for a better way. "In the UK there is this system of *trials*, where people are tried out, but that is also a tough kind of testing: day after day people are judging whether you are good enough for your job. It is not healthy when colleagues have that kind of power over you for one or even two years."

Playing for an audience while building up a programme together with colleagues is totally different from an audition. "It can make you nervous as well, but in a different way. What helped me was realising that a jury sits there during an audition because they *want* to appoint someone. So trying to focus on the fact that I regard them as an audience, who want to enjoy what they hear is helpful. I kept thinking, 'I am going to enjoy my playing, to play freely, and give them a nice afternoon with a beautifully sounding viola.'"

Upon her own request Berdien has a 75 % job, which gives her the opportunity to play chamber music as well as to practise. "Only playing and working is not satisfying. I want to have time for myself in my life. When I have my summer holiday I want to have a few weeks to do absolutely nothing and a few weeks to get into shape again."

(Lifelong) Learning as a musician

Berdien feels she learns in a different way now she has been working in the profession for some years. "I matured after I left the conservatoire. At the conservatoire I did a lot, I took many lessons, and after that period I felt that you don't make much progress in terms of technical development and virtuosity, but in terms of the continuing development of the richness of musicality. I feel much more myself now, and I am less in search. I am a bit older now; I have been through things, also difficult things. When I listen to music nowadays it is more intense to me. I can put more of myself into music. Technically I keep learning as well, but it needs to be balanced with inspiration."

Practising orchestral parts goes faster than in the past. "I get skilled in it, I have a kind of flexibility now which makes me pick up things easier. I love practising orchestral parts, because once I have done it, it is wonderful to perform it."

At some moment Berdien felt that she had not had enough technical training during her viola study. At present she is trying to change this by working with a colleague who plays the violin excellently and helps her to improve her bowing technique. She learns a lot from him. "There was a moment where I got stuck. I did not feel the balance between body and instrument. So when he commented on that I was immediately open to it, because I want to learn. It is important to be open and to be willing to listen to a colleague. I had to swallow my pride, but he really helps me out. We play together a lot and he showed me that my bow change at the frog could

be much better. We have been working together for a year now, and I have learned a lot. A world has opened to me, which makes me very happy. I feel that it is critical for a musician to keep doing these kinds of things. Everyone needs a mirror. I listen in a different way to myself now. I look so to speak into the mirror while I am playing. I make the step to how it must sound as short as possible. Sound is the point of departure now and not the kind of technique I use."

Berdien does not feel that she learns much in the orchestra. That is why she wants to do other things as well, ranging from yoga to courses in philosophy. "I need sufficient mental input, otherwise I get unhappy." Currently she plays in a string quartet and she learns a lot from that. Especially the 'inspiration of the moment' is something she likes very much. She feels that in the first place it is important to get along with the other musicians, and that in addition to that it is good when all members focus on the performance in the same way. She finds it important that the performance is spontaneous, including the space for taking individual liberties.

She feels that a good communication between the musicians is critical: "Including sitting in the car, driving to the concert and having a good laugh. And then the best thing that can happen is that you inspire each other." The less talking, the better, Berdien feels. "You have to try to say everything through playing. By looking, playing, things have to come together *here*." But she realises that in a string quartet a lot of time has to be spent on technical matters as well.

Learning in the orchestra does not compare to learning in chamber music, it seems. "Musically I do not learn that much in the orchestra, though I do learn from the repertoire of course, and from some conductors. There are only a few colleagues from whom I learn. I learned a lot in the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and in all my chamber music activities. What I am learning especially in the orchestra is how to control myself; I am learning how to play in an orchestra, and that is difficult enough. But musically, I don't learn much. In an orchestra you are surrounded by people who do not always play beautifully, or you have a conductor who does not let the orchestra play beautifully. That can be demanding sometimes. Sometimes a conductor does not touch things in a score, which I regard as musically important and then you have to swallow your irritation. Sometimes it frustrates me. It might sound strange, but what is helpful to me then, is to play very well myself. It is the best therapy: practice, play well, and stay true to yourself. If my neighbour would say, 'Here is bloody Bruckner again', I would think, 'Try to enjoy it, make something good of it, and try to inspire the person next to you'. That also helps making it physically less demanding." But all in all Berdien often feels inspired in the orchestra, especially during concerts with good conductors.

The role of music, important influences and decisions

Music plays an important role in Berdien's life, but she feels that it is also 'work'. "I am not engaged with music the whole day. I find other things important as well. I am not blinkered when it comes to my job."[6]

She feels that her parents have been, and still are, very important and inspirational for her, and that this actually goes for a lot of people in her life, among whom teachers and students. Important and influential are not only people but also pieces of music, like recordings she listened to with the family during her childhood. The concerts with the Haydn Youth String Orchestra and with the Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra have been of great importance, the latter even bringing her to Sarajevo to give the very first concert after the Yugoslavian war.

Last but not least her Spanish boyfriend Juan was an important influence. Berdien met him at the Amsterdam Conservatoire, where he studied the cello and they were together for seven years. Last year the relationship came to an end. She sometimes found it difficult to have a relationship with a musician who was so talented and open. It made her feel insecure. "He has been very influential for me, but more as a person than as a musician. After our relationship ended, I decided that my next one would *not* be with a musician, but you cannot really plan that of course."

Reflecting on the career and the future

"I think that in terms of my career I am more or less standing still at the moment, but that is not easy to change when you are in an orchestra. The only thing I can do is apply for the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra or for a principal position in another orchestra. I am not sure if I want that. So I don't think that I will continue to develop very much in terms of my career. Of course I don't know how long I will stay in the orchestra and whether I will be doing this my whole life. Nevertheless, I want to keep developing and in order to do so my focus is on chamber music. I am pleased that I have this job, I find it incredibly important to have my own income. I am satisfied with my job, but I am not always satisfied with the conductors; that sometimes worries me. As an orchestral musician, you depend on a conductor. But in the end, I have always been most concerned whether I would have a job or not, and now I have one, it gives me a lot of peace."

Berdien has no specific long-term aims. She wants to be engaged in her string quartet and stay in the orchestra for at least ten more years. She is quite sure that she would like to have children, although she sometimes has her doubts, because she also enjoys her freedom.

She feels satisfaction with the changes she went through after her time at secondary school and the conservatoire. "I am more satisfied with myself now. I have changed things and I have developed into who I am now. I have really searched for my identity. Since I turned thirty I enjoy the fact that I am a bit older and more mature. I like that feeling and I think that it came quite late, but I am glad that it came anyway.

At present I feel that I am in the right place as a musician. I would not like to use the word 'thorough' about myself anymore, but I am useable. I am enthusiastic for things and I like working with other people. I am learning to cope with people. I am a perfectionist but I realise that sometimes I also have to let go. That is why *not* talking is sometimes better in music-making. That insight is quite recent. I used to be quite verbally persistent, which does not work in the end, I think."

Berdien likes to work with musicians from all kinds of generations. "Someone's age is no issue for me. I meet older musicians who are totally enthusiastic and younger musicians who appear to have gone to sleep."

Changes in the music world

"It seems to me that music has no right to exist of its own accord anymore, but that it has to be *sold*. It used to be our cultural heritage, like literature. Now extra efforts have to be made in order to interest people; you have to acquire your audience. Not that I mind doing that."

Her situation cannot be compared to that of chamber musicians or soloists, she feels. "They may know a lot more about what happens and what needs to be done, but I have a fixed job. Although you do see the number of audiences decreasing. I find it important and I see it as my duty to make people enthusiastic for culture and for going to concerts or theatre and dance performances. I find our cultural heritage the most important thing in existence."

There is not much change in orchestras, Berdien finds, except for the fact that the professional level of musicians keeps rising. She regrets the fact that fewer talented musicians choose a professional career in music because of an uncertain future. She finds it unacceptable that such a small percentage of government money goes to the arts, in a country that is so rich.

In the string quartet Berdien learns a lot, more than she learns from her colleagues in the orchestra. But one has to take it as it is. "It can irritate you, but that does not change anything. This is about working with people. I can live with it, fine. But my learning takes place outside of it."

Interview held April 13, 2006 in Amsterdam

1 The diploma 'teaching musician' changed in 1994 to what is nowadays called a bachelor's diploma; a second phase diploma is comparable to a master's.
2 Comparable with grammar school.
3 Higher General Secondary School.
4 See note 1. above.
5 Symphonic poem by Richard Strauss.
6 Berdien uses the Dutch term 'vakidioot' here, a well-known word amongst musicians.

Dena DeRose

Dena began playing the piano at the age of three and became an accomplished piano player by the time she was in her early twenties. She would drive hours on end from upstate NY to NY city to hear idols such as Hank Jones, Kenny Barron and Mulgrew Miller perform. Unexpected, but early stages of carpal tunnel syndrome and arthritis forced her to stop playing. While she was recovering and wondering if she'd ever be able to play again, Dena discovered her ability to sing. For the next two years she worked as a jazz vocalist performing in venues where she used to appear as a pianist. Dena DeRose has developed into a renowned singer and pianist in jazz. She is not only a remarkable jazz stylist but an arranger, composer and teacher. She is her own best accompanist. Her playing reflects a lifetime of piano studies and is put together with her love for lyrics and harmony. DeRose teaches Vocals at Purchase College and New School in New York and as a guest professor at the Prince Claus Conservatoire in Groningen.

In the colleges I am on the voice faculty, but with all students I work on the piano as well. I have often wondered why I am nowhere as a pianist and why I teach the voice everywhere.

I realise now after years of this that there is a reason: I teach at the voice faculty not because I sing, but because I play piano! It took me a while to realise this.

Childhood; an early engagement in music

Dena de Rose lived and worked for the first 25 years of her life in Binghamton in upstate New York before she moved to New York City, made a career, started travelling and had an international breakthrough as a jazz singer and pianist.

Born in Binghamton NY on February 15, 1966 as the first born of, as she describes it 'a lower middle class family of workers', consisting of a father who was a construction worker and a mother who was a former professional ice skater, Dena started her music education at a very young age. Music was in the genes; her grandfather from her father's side played the squeezebox and her grandmother from mother's side played the piano 'church style'. They were never taught music but played it by the ear.

Dena's mother had left high school at the age of 16, starting competitions in ice skating and touring the world with the *Ice Capades*, performing in a lot of shows. After her marriage she stopped touring and started teaching ice skating and roller skating. Dena was born after five years of marriage. Two years later a brother followed.

When Dena was very young, her mother also taught ballroom dancing: "I would go to the dance studio and wait there for her. I used to watch, and learn the music. I heard a lot of all that popular music. She loved that music. At home we had an 8 track.[1] We

heard mainly Tony Bennett, Frank Sinatra, Glenn Campbell, Johnny Cash and Barbra Streisand. We never listened to classical music; classical music was new for me."

Dena started to be engaged in music very early: "before I remember anything. I was two and my uncle got me a little toy organ. I remembered melodies of songs from church[2] and I found them on my organ after coming home from church. My mum was musical enough, and she could hear me finding these songs."

When Dena was around three years old her mother tried to find a piano teacher, but Dena was small for her age, so that was not a simple thing. "It took her six months to find me a teacher. She then found this elderly woman. I have very vague memories of my piano lessons. But I will never forget this lady. She was in her seventies. I can see the room. But of course I was small, I could not reach the pedals and my hands were small. She got me to read music. The lessons were in a music store with music studios on the second floor. You heard music everywhere, which was exciting. My mum always took me."

Dena was a very quiet child and did not speak much. She liked the teacher, enjoyed the lessons, and practised, going quickly through the books; "I was soaking it up. I immediately learned to read music. But of course I was ear trained already."

At a certain moment her teacher could not teach Dena anything more. Then her mother found her another teacher. When Dena was five years old her mother took her to the nuns to have lessons (in Kindergarten) but: "The private lessons I had had were more advanced than the lessons of the nuns. They taught me things like baby songs. My mum realised very quickly that this was not working, took me out and tried to find a private teacher. I was around six and the teacher my mum found then was very mean, hitting my fingers with a ruler. Every lesson I was in tears. This lasted for five or six lessons. My mum would sit outside waiting for me. The teacher was bitter and not very good with kids. I told my mum, but the teacher did not hide it either. She scared me. My mum felt very quickly that we had to find someone else. Two doors away in the same building where I had had lessons with my first teacher we found another teacher. I was around six then. Again I got an older woman, Miss Lovell, she was very nice. Most of my teachers were elderly. I had learned to respect older people, like my grandmother, so I was respectful towards these older teachers."

Fortunately Dena had spent such a short time with the teacher ruling with the ruler that she had not become discouraged. Music interested her deeply and the piano strongly appealed to her: "I loved the piano player Liberace. He started out playing classical piano and then became more of a show man. At a young age I saw him on TV. An entertainer, very flashy and flamboyant, with a lot of glitter and big rings. But during any of his shows he would always play a serious classical piece and that fascinated me. His personality and music appealed to me. The piano fascinated me, I never saw anybody really play it live at that age."

Miss Lovell also had an organ, which started to fascinate Dena highly. "I did not know much about other instruments. I wondered what it was. My mum loved it and inquired about it. Around this time in the seventies Hammond organs were the real big thing, lots of people had them in their homes. So then things changed: now during school time I did piano and over the summer I started to learn the organ."

Meanwhile the family had acquired a piano at home, but they now got rid of it in order to obtain an organ. "We lived in a small house, my brother and me sharing a bedroom. We did not have a lot of money. We could not combine the finances of a piano and an organ and lessons in both, and I could practise the piano in school."

Now Dena at the age of seven started to have piano lessons during the school year and organ lessons during the summer season. She was in a catholic elementary school for the first five years of education, then went to public school starting in the 5th grade through the 8th grade. The 8th and 9th grade she took in middle school and then went to high school in the 10th grade. She would graduate at high school when she was 18 years old. All through these schools Dena would go early to school and practise before school started and stayed after the lessons had finished. "I would sometimes skip class and go out into the auditorium, sit in the dark and play for hours. I improvised a lot, not especially jazz, but just playing tunes and songs by ear. I composed aurally, remembering by memory. When I was ten, I started to compose also in writing. I kept a few of those. I would not write notes; I would write the letters of the alphabet. That would help me remember. I could read music, but did not think of using it like that in writing."

When Dena was in the 5th grade of public school she started to play percussion as well, mainly playing mallets[3] but also, because she could tune them, taking up the kettledrums. She played in the school orchestra, later she would play in the graduate concert band, and she played piano with a choir. Almost every spare minute of her life she was engaged in music.

"When I first went to public school the band director had heard that I could play the organ; he got me right away for the concert band. But then they also needed a viola player for the string session of the orchestra. I tried the violin for half a year, but that was nothing for me. I liked the percussion though. They asked me to play for assemblies at school and so on; they had me play when the people came in and they rented an organ for that."

When Dena was about ten years old she started to really turn to the organ. She calls it 'a kind of natural shift'. She now played the organ all the time through the school year, and this gave her a lot of opportunities. When at the age of thirteen she moved to middle school Dena started playing in a concert band, as well as in what was then called a 'stage band' which was actually a jazz band. Both were led by the same man. "He knew I could play the piano as well. But I had no idea about jazz.

I was always looking for the right notes. I could read everything, but chord changes were very hard for me. None of my teachers knew anything about these chords. The harmonic chord progressions of I-IV-V-I were about all I knew. But this band director would find charts for our age group and he would write out the chords for me, not the rhythms. I learned a lot from figuring it out."

Around the same time Dena started playing in a 'wedding band': "in this stage band were two brothers, a drummer and a trumpet player. Their father had a wedding band in town, already for 25 years. They had so much work, that the father put a band together with the boys, for the work he could not take on and which he could drop. So a band was put together of thirteen-year-old kids, including me, that was pretty good! We played the music of the day, including waltzes, polkas and all that was needed for a wedding. The father gave us music and we learned it. Our band consisted of a trumpet player (also playing the guitar), a drummer and another trumpet player, this musician could actually take up any instrument like guitar, trumpet, trombone, saxophone, flugelhorn, flute, he could play them well enough. I had a portable, fold up organ for the band, which was very heavy. My father bought me a chord synthesizer as well, one of the first ones, very popular in the seventies. I put the synthesizer on top of the organ that also had bass pedals. I played the bass with my feet. So I also was the bass player. It was the four of us. Eventually we got a bass player, so I got rid of the pedals and did more on the keyboards, then playing on two boards. We learned music from the radio or tape, or from sheet music. If music was not available in print yet, we listened and copied it ourselves. You learn a lot from that. I started out playing by ear, so I could always do a lot in that way. I was always trying to learn songs. I wrote out a lot for the band, wrote charts."

Dena spent a lot of time on music, but on sports (mainly basketball) as well: "if it weren't for music, I would have gone for sports." Dena describes herself as an average student, "not smart. But I really put time in my school". Particularly mathematics she found very hard, she had to work hard at it.

Wherever music was happening in school, Dena would always be the piano player. She played in theatre plays and with the choirs. She practised from seven in the morning or had band rehearsals before and after school time. "I was in a marching band at high school, for the football games, playing the xylophone. By the time I was in 6th grade, still in elementary school, I got in the Junior Orchestra and later went on to be accepted in the Youth Symphony Orchestra.[4]

The schools that Dena was in did not pay more than average attention to music education, but Dena tried to get everything out of it: "I tried to find anything or any way for music for myself. I was going to be there."

She feels that in the seventies it was a good time for art: "Schools were more art-oriented. Society was. There was a lot of pop music and harmonies, a lot of songs, songs with form, Elton John and so on. Many interesting things were happening in music. Music in general was more present in the schools. In the eighties art programmes started getting cut out of the schools. By the time I graduated from high school, in 1984, things were diminishing. One really noticed that. It is still not back, still minimal, and tough."

Supportive parents

In her high school period Dena still kept up her organ lessons. Until she was 17 to 18 years old, it was her main focus. Her mother supported her where she could, always bringing her to her lessons, even in her pyjamas when she had the flu. Routine and learning were important for Dena. Her mother was much disciplined, no doubt in connection with the ice skating period. Dena's father was disciplined as well. "My parents set the example. They are routine-oriented persons. My father is now 78 years old and he still gets up at 5.30 in the morning. It was helpful. I would go to school early to practise; I sometimes had to wait for the school to open! Coming home I would practise again".

Dena loved sport. She recognises the routine orientation in sport as well. She played basketball through the catholic youth organisation; "every day I did basketball and music. So sometimes I had to make choices, and skip a season, because I also was in the Youth Symphony with rehearsals on Saturday. But I chose music."

Dena's motivation was enormous, and her parents were very supportive and stimulating. "My dad was the quiet man of the family, but he was present, although he never would raise his voice. You knew from a look. I learned from his routines. He was really proud of me, paid for everything. He loved music. They were both very supportive. They knew I was talented."

Encouraging and discouraging teachers

"One teacher who discouraged me stands out in my mind. He was a band director I had in high school. I was in a very large high school. In my senior year[5], one of the two band directors was very nasty to me. He had his pets, helping those he thought were talented. When we were all asked in our 11th year what we would be taking up after high school, he told me to my face that I should not go into music. He said: 'I think you should think about something else'. It broke my heart. I left the school that day crying, all these years and at that point someone saying that. I was not a very strong willed person, even though I was strong willed enough to find musical situations to be in. But I did things in music because it made me feel good and because I could do something I knew I could do well, or learn something from a musical situation. I learned from that. I went to the other band director, Mr. Thompson, who

really did encourage me and helped me through the rest of the year. He helped me gain my self-confidence again. 'If you feel you want to do this, then do it; you can do anything', he said. For a man at that time to speak to a young girl wanting to go into art in this male-oriented world was great. Most girls were still expected to be nurses. He was really supportive. I will never forget either of them."

At this time Dena wanted to know more about jazz. She found a jazz teacher with whom she spent a couple of lessons. "He taught me a few things, but discouraged me as well, telling I had to go in classical, not jazz, because jazz was so hard to learn. I could read anything, but chord changes made me fall apart. I could not understand putting this together. It seemed so foreign to me, like learning Chinese." In the stage band Dena learned a little jazz, but it was still hard without guided instruction; "I had to find my way bit by bit. So I bought books, I needed to use recording for learning."

Choice for the profession in music

For Dena it has always been obvious that her career would be in music: "I did not think twice about it." But she was searching, both for the right mentors and the right choices. "In my 11th year at high school I still always was early in school to practise. We had choir rehearsals from 7.30 till 8. I used to hang around early. So one morning the choir conductor Mr. Lechtowitz talked to me about what I would do at the audition for college, he asked me to play scales and I could not do it. Nobody had ever asked me to play scales, after 12 years of lessons! I did not know what was required to get into college. So I started to work like mad in order to practise that. I started scales with the metronome. After a year I could do it. Then I had to get repertoire together, so Mr. Lechtowitz really helped me prepare for college. He prepared me for classical piano."

Dena still did not know what to do, so she auditioned on both piano and organ at different schools. "I was offered a full scholarship at Concordia College in New York, but I was not sure if I wanted to go away. I lived a very sheltered life. I then did an audition in Binghamton and got a scholarship. There were two teachers who would be coming there for the four years I was going to be there, Walter Ponce and Seymour Fink. Binghamton, being a state university was not too expensive, so that settled my choice."

Dena had no clear view of the future, while making these choices. She thought she would study both the organ and the piano. Her parents were very supportive, but could not help her with those kinds of choices: "They were not educated enough for enabling me to think that over. I was the only one in the family who graduated in high school. My brother did not fit in any educational system." In the end Dena made her choice for the piano, mainly because the two well-known teachers would start to teach the piano in Binghamton.

Just before Dena entered College, she entered the *Top 40 band* in Binghamton. "That was also a reason for me to choose for Binghamton and not Concordia College. My mum helped me make that decision. It was a well-known band, and I could make a lot of money with that. Even in the wedding band, I sometimes made 600 dollars in one weekend. I used that money to buy things like a keyboard and an amplifier. Dad initially helped me, but at a certain moment I could pay for it myself. Now I made a lot of money in the Top 40 band, more than my father made working construction." Dena felt confident about her choices. The continuation of living with her friends was attractive. And "I knew I would be on the stage. That was for sure."

Dena's period at the Music College

After graduation in high school, Dena's mother urged her to first take up a course at college in business. "Mum had a big influence there. She was concerned about my future. She knew I wanted to go in music. But she felt like 'why would my daughter go to college for music, she is already great!' But I knew that I needed to keep growing, and that business was not for me."

In college Dena took one semester of business courses, and then she took a semester off. In that spring semester she really took her decision for music and auditioned again.

Dena started her music studies when she was 19, in 1985. She took on a four years bachelor's programme, starting as a classical pianist, but "there was a jazz band in the school a well. I played in that. I was still playing in the pop band and in the wedding band."

Dena was also teaching by then in the music store in Binghamton. "I had 20 to 25 organ and piano beginner students, and next to that my school full-time and my bands. I was forward motioned, trying to soak it all up all the time."

The college provided old fashioned conservatoire training, like harmony, piano lessons etc. Dena worked most with Seymour Fink. "He was in his mid fifties. Once he found out that I played jazz, starting to learn more and more by now, he was intrigued. He had always been intrigued by jazz but, like me, could never understand it. So my lessons ended up with half classical instruction and half me teaching him about chords and jazz, blues and so on."

Learning jazz Dena did 'just by plugging away'. "I knew I wanted to be good like my friends in the jazz bands. I always had a feeling of competitiveness like in sport. I always did a lot on my own. To me that is how I learn better." Dena describes the technical training for piano in college as helpful, but not enough. "I did learn the basic stuff at college, but not really about building a technique, and also because the lessons were split into half and half; Seymour and I only got into a few things."

Dena describes the role of her teachers in college: "I do not think they were the best teachers. Seymour was a good teacher. He listened well to the questions you had, would answer them and show you things; Walther Ponce on the other hand

was a bit more like feeling a star. That was tough, he could scream and yell if he heard things he did not like. It gave me the same feeling of failing in maths. But a lot of students loved that behaviour. I sort of gravitated to Seymour those years. He was inspirational, showed me a lot of classical music and modern stuff and showed an interest in my jazz. I was teaching him as well, so in a way he taught me how to teach. In that way he was a kind of role model."

At college there was a little jazz department, consisting of a jazz band and a jazz history class. The jazz instructor took Dena a little but under his wing and made her teacher assistant. "I was always looking for things to learn. That did not always happen consciously."

Not graduating but on the road instead

Dena did not graduate. She stayed three and a half years and then went on tour with a pop band for about a year. "My goal in college was not really to graduate. I just wanted to be deep into music. I didn't regret not having finished. I was so much in music. I knew everybody in the band. I had never travelled, and we travelled all the East Coast, South Florida, Texas, Rhode Island. I was not home at all for a year. We were trying to make it big, which actually never happened. I started singing in the pop band; background singing, keyboard players in pop bands generally do that. I did not like it. I wanted to concentrate on playing. The technology of synthesizers grew rapidly, as well as sequencers, but that is not human being playing. I wanted to play everything myself. We did Madonna, Michael Jackson, I would play the sequencers part with one hand and other things with my other hand. I wanted to play all the parts. I didn't want to connect that with singing. I was not so good in singing, I did not know anything about breathing for example. We were a very creative pop band. We learned the stuff of the recordings. But we would also make arrangements. In the end I got fed up with people coming to tell me: 'that is not how the song goes'! Like they want to sing along. We were really into our arrangements. Then suddenly I thought: 'I did not get into music for people to come up and tell me that what I am playing is not like the record. Am I a mimic? I got into music to be creative about basic songs and using my creativity'. I realised that in pop bands you will have to play the same music the same way all the time. It started to dawn on me. I finally thought: 'I quit'. I gave my notice. After I got off the road with the band I was nearly 22. I went home and shifted my focus to jazz."

Dena only regrets not having finished college because without a degree she is now considered a lecturer, instead of a professor, in the colleges where she currently teaches, which means that she cannot have health benefits. This is the reason why she is now getting back to earn a degree, using the experience she has as credits.

Starting a career in Jazz…
"I was 22 and I got back to the top 40 band where I had been in. I knew when I left the road band, that this is not for me. But I got into the top 40 band again to earn money. Within six months time I decided to focus on jazz. I started to study with the jazz pianist Doug Beardsley. He was grumpy, and I was again in tears. I could not understand what he was talking about. It felt like my *Bad Maths* at high school: I heard numbers and just freaked out, telling myself that I am too stupid to do this. But I really wanted to learn it so I started to listen to recordings of jazz and at a certain moment it really started to click. It was as if the light went on. I remember exactly when this happened. I was so happy. Again I did not study long with this teacher, a few lessons and I quit."

…having severe physical problems to overcome
Dena now focused on jazz, practising a lot. But then things changed: for about three years she would hardly be able to play the piano.

> Within six months I started to have pain in my right hand. I thought that perhaps I practised too much. But even when I practised less the pain increased. It did not get better. There was no relationship with practising. I kept wondering: did I not have enough muscles for fast music? Maybe I did not practise enough instead of too much? Finally I went to a doctor who told me I had to be operated on a *carpal tunnel syndrome*. In the late eighties the carpal tunnel syndrome was a new thing. He assumed that that was the problem. I was not sure, I could not imagine having my hand operated. After a couple of months it still did not get better. I went back and then I finally decided to take the operation. He was a specialised surgeon from the area, well respected. After the operation there was still a lot of pain. It did not get better. Then I stopped playing altogether for three or four months and was just totally depressed. I simply could not play. The diagnosis had not been wrong, but the doctor had not looked fully well enough at my hand. Then I heard about a girl in my town who was a guitar player and also had had hand problems. She had found a doctor in New York, who was a real specialist. So I made an appointment with him. He worked with musicians a lot. I told him all the backgrounds. He made a cat scan and an X ray and showed me the problem: a joint in my hand that looked like it was lacking cartilage. When I did play I was getting a bruise on the top of my hand. I always would see it the day after I played a gig. He showed me that the joint inside my hand was rubbing against my skin, so bruising formed inside out, and there was not much cartilage left. Now what? He suggested another operation. I really needed to think it over. I went home and got totally depressed and confused. I did not know whether to believe him that I would

> be able to play again after another operation. This second doctor told that the syndrome was caused by arthritis. The pain became so terrible, that it would even reach my ears! I then took another opinion with a third doctor. He agreed with the NY doctor and with his suggestion for treatment. Meanwhile I did not have any health insurance, because I was not in school anymore. The first operation my dad had paid for. This one was going to cost a lot of money. I did not know if I could believe all of it. Almost a year now I was not playing at all. I became depressed, drank a lot, started using drugs, anything to escape making a decision.

During this time somehow it happened I was hanging around in the bar, listening to Doug Beardsley with his trio. It was getting late, and they were still playing. Someone said: 'Dena get up and sing!' At first I did not want, I thought I could not sing. So I protested: 'I do not know the words' and so on. But they got me a *Real Book*.[6] They knew I sang in the pop band as well. Basically they meant well: everybody in the community knew that I, being a star musician in Binghamton even when I was 18, was very depressed so they tried to encourage me and help me feel better. In the end I got up, took the book and sang. Everybody clapped and I liked doing it. I was not looking at anybody, but I had a good time. It made me feel good to actually be involved with music again. So I decided to learn a bunch of tunes and hire Doug Beardsley's trio to back me up. I booked myself around town as *Dena DeRose & Doug Beardsley's Trio*. All of a sudden there was a jazz scene happening, because any club I saw where I played with my top 40 band, I went in and offered to play during cocktail hour, or brunch. I created gigs, got myself working seven times a week with the trio. Nothing was going on like that in Binghamton! And all of a sudden more little jazz bands cropped up. Doug was very influential in that. I just loved the singing. Vocals is of course more attractive than just a jazz trio. So I worked a lot and I learned a lot of songs, and people were supportive.

> I did not play the piano at all for another year and a half. Maybe some left hand stuff, like bass on the keyboard. I tried to give up on it. I could not decide on the operation. But I missed the playing. I used to watch Doug a lot during gigs. Then I decided 'okay, perhaps I must see this doctor again'. I saw him again; he did the same examination and nothing had changed. It was still the same diagnosis and advice. He ensured me again that it would help me to play again. So, not having played for so long, I decided to do it. They put a pin through my hand to secure the joint. Took it out again. I found it all quite traumatic. It was so frightening to have them work on my hand. I was under local anaesthesia. I had to do it, because I absolutely wanted to play. I had no other options. After the operation my cap was on for eight weeks. Once the cap came off, the doctor took the pin off. I said:

> 'now do I have to do some therapy'? 'A little bit', the doctor said. 'But your main therapy is… to play'. And I just… started crying. I was so happy. I had never thought I would play again. We got up and we hugged and hugged. It has indeed been very traumatic for me. I have been so terribly depressed. I wanted to start playing again, so I had to train my muscles again. I could not play gigs yet. Once I got a little bit of muscles back, only pressing one note felt like I had to carry a very heavy weight. I got a little gig in an Italian restaurant. Nobody that I knew went to eat there. I started singing a song and played the bass line, and just played a few chords. So slowly I started singing and playing. It took me five months after the operation to play at a normal capacity. But finally this happened without pain. It took me a year and then my hands were really strong again.

Dena took lessons with the piano pedagogue Sofia Rosoff in New York, who had specialised in technique, in order to prevent problems and build a sound technique.

After her operation Dena went on in Binghamton, playing the piano in a trio with double bass and drums. Meanwhile she had decided to try and make a further career in New York City, so she saved money to move to New York. She also had to pay off her operation, which had cost her 14.000 USD. So she worked a lot, took 40 to 50 students a week, and played in cocktail hours and brunches, anything she could get.

…and moving to New York

One year after her operation, in 1991, at the age of 25, Dena moved to New York, although she hardly had any money. "I had always wanted to go to New York to make a career. But until now I had never been sure what I wanted to do there. By this time, finally acquiring my skills, I realised I could get a lot of work myself, just singing and playing. I knew people liked it, and I liked it myself. So I moved there and I got some work. It was tough, but I did it. I had very fortunate situations, like this couple that heard me in a restaurant and rented me a room, only paying the maintenance, in their apartment in the West Side, which I was also allowed to use, because they were there only three days of every six weeks."

Dena worked a lot, doing mainly solo work at that time, and did well. She does not feel especially entrepreneurial, "I just come from a working class family. I am always looking for work and I always find work."

"I did a lot of solo piano and singing when I went to New York. For example at *Danny's Skylight Cabaret Room*, I would play outside, near the band, and met musicians that would hear me there because they had to go by me. They would sometimes make contact with me, bringing their instruments out and starting to play with me. I met many famous bass players in the jazz world, having such

opportunities. They were very encouraging. If I asked them to join my own trio they often said yes. I was fortunate to play with a lot of good musicians. Of course in NY there are many *jam sessions* in people's homes and also in clubs. You would play with musicians from the same level or better, in relaxed situations. So in that way you are learning from your friends. You talk; you hear about clubs, about work. You meet people, or you meet the owner of the club. They ask for your demo tape. You just need a lot of talent and a lot of willingness to work hard."

In New York Dena started to think further about her growth as a musician: "The level in New York was so high. It dawned on me that I had to learn as much as I could. Play with musicians that were better than me. The life of New York changed me. I learned, both musically and about life."

Learning and composing

Dena learns mainly from listening. Learning, according to her, always starts with listening. "When I like something I hear, the minute I come home my playing changes. I cannot mimic though, it is not about that."

She cannot exactly explain whether her learning is intuitive or out of full awareness: "I think it is a little bit of both. Now that I know more about harmony, I really try to figure out a lot, like 'what kind of changes are they?'[7] I can do it in the same way with for example *The Rite of Spring.* I have always thought very orchestrally. That has to do with my classical piano playing background. I see the piano as an orchestra or a big band. You start then framing it. I think instrumentally and use my voice also sometimes unconsciously in an instrumental way."

Dena's compositions always start with emotion, "like something that happens in my life which I feel emotional about. I go to the piano, make some sounds to help the emotion come out. As a kid my compositions always emerged through emotions. That has not basically changed. Except that now I teach in schools already for some years, I teach composing, I teach arranging and theory classes. Now my mind thinks more theoretically and I analyse things more. So yes, it always starts out of an emotional context. I get a feeling and then I try to make the sounds match the feelings. But theoretically I can think, 'I will make a blues of it'. Probably I make some kind of format. But the basis is the same."

Sometimes the next step is a decision on form. Dena makes a lot of sketches. She makes the lyrics herself as well; sometimes she collaborates with others, she then writes the tune, and then someone else writes the text on top of the tune. "I always start instrumentally. My song 'Home with you' is a good example of emotional memory that is at the basis of a composition. Thing is, when I am on the road it is great, but nothing goes beyond home. Lots of my colleagues travelled a lot. Travelling was also my dream. At a certain moment I lived for ten years in New York and I never travelled. I heard great stories about it. Once I was travelling I

realised that nobody had told me how marvellous it is to come home. Coming home travelling myself, I suddenly remembered all those stories. That feeling sort of made me write that song. The music first came out, after that the words poured out. I just start writing, it tends to flow out. I always write it down, it emerges so to speak." Dena composes a lot and tries to find sufficient time for it.

Living with Sheryl

In New York Dena met guitarist Sheryl Bailey. At present they have been living together for seven and a half years. Dena is very proud of her: "Sheryl is the talented one in the family." Dena describes Sheryl as a guitarist with many styles and a strong artist. She points out that even in New York it is an issue having a partner of the same gender. It does not really anger her, although "your love for anyone should be acknowledged. For example, if I would get hit by a car, they would not allow her into my hospital room. That angers me. But hopefully soon it will change in New York."

Further development of the career

Once Dena had an agent in New York, some five years ago she started travelling, first going to Florida and California, later also to Europe. "I was not good at selling myself, not now when I had come to this level. Theatres do not want the musicians to call them themselves and begging for a concert or gig. They want someone representing them. Such a person can speak much more highly of the musician. So I got somebody as well. I don't have this agent anymore. After four years she could not book me in the places where I wanted to be, which had to do with my own level of growing and development and career. Right now I am more in concert situations, jazz clubs and festivals thanks to a different manager. Certain people can only take you so far. Then you have to make a new step. I am at that point right now. I come now to the bigger festivals, and I am looking for an agent who is more connected to that. You need an agent to bring you where you want to be. I know pretty much what my pathway needs to be. I like to be in situations where people can hear you, so in concert situations. I want to be at the level that they come to listen to me. Still I think my music could expand more, not from practising more, but from more experience."

Requirements of a contemporary musician

Dena knows what is needed to function as a contemporary musician. "Seeing others, listening to wonderful musicians. Working a lot, being a musician. Being competitive and getting better. I learned everything I know through working, be it practising, be it through life situations. In whatever musical situation you are in: it has to come out on stage. All my life I have thrown myself in situations I was not really prepared to. But I learned very quickly. People around me could see that I

was a hard worker, and driven, and they often gave me a chance. When I teach, I teach the 3 D's: Desire, (if you don't have it do something else), Determination (because the business is tough) and Discipline (get up early to practise!). There is not a lot of money in it. You don't do it for money. But if you work hard you can make a living. This is what I try to teach my students. Go out for work. Play different things. Be determined that you want to learn."

Teaching

Dena teaches at the Hartt School of Music in Hartford, Connecticut, at Purchase College in New York, at New School, New York and in the Jazz Programme 'New York comes to Groningen' of the Prince Claus Conservatoire.[8] On and off she teaches students privately, and gives clinics in colleges and high schools when she is on tour. She teaches both singing and piano. The main things she learns from teaching are "How to relate to people. Mainly that every student has its own way of thinking. You have to think of different ways to say the same thing. Music is also like that, especially jazz. I also learned a lot from how people think and give them things to learn from different angles. I learned from teaching how to practise. Making a plan of action till the next lessons. 'How do you do it, how to really work on things? How to practise?' I learned about myself while teaching. It makes you reflective."

Being a vocal teacher is for Dena more rewarding than being a piano teacher, because "I am trying to get singers to know about music. Not just sing. The art of singing, even in the classical world, is often just practising your songs. By ear learning, learning about chord changing, you have to know every part. Conductors do know that. They know everything that is happening. They know so much about the music. The Prince Claus Conservatoire and Purchase are the only programmes for jazz that integrate singers with instrumentalists. Many other schools have this separation. But integration is critical for vocal students. You do not need a singers theory class, why would you? People often assume I am on a piano faculty. In all colleges I am on the voice faculty, and with each singer I work on piano as well. I have often wondered why I am nowhere as a pianist and why I teach the voice everywhere. I realise now after years of this that there is a reason: 'I teach at the voice faculty not because I sing, but because I play piano!' It took me a while to realise this."

Current aims and longer term ambitions

"In New York I quickly realised that not everybody gets the *big breaks* and makes it to the great jazz scenes. Now I am at a point that I see that I am not going to be the *choice one or two*. I realise that it is a lifelong venture. I want to keep developing and I keep wishing always to play with musicians better than me. That has always been a goal. I am not afraid of that and in those situations I learn quicker than in

situations where I play with my friends who are all of the same level. When I am around people of the same level I feel comfortable, but I want to learn more. It is about my personal development. Take the 'Desire': there are times in a career when you lose desire. Then something spurs you again. 'I can do this. I can be on that stage. I know I can do that. What did they do which I do not do?' That is learning! What do you do on that stage? What keeps you on the stage? Continuous growth. Some people have a lot of breaks. I also had a lot of breaks, but each person has its own tasks. It took me a while to realise that. Being in the right time and the right space. It can all be by chance. But always you have to have this Desire. It was never my main desire to be *The Chosen* one. My desire was not so much about my career as about music. I do want to get better in my music, play at a higher level in my career. My longer term aim changes more in-depth than it changes in direction, it is going to expand in repertoire, instrumentation whatever it is. It is a thread through my life. I do see the picture: kid in school, not listening to the math teachers, but day dreaming, seeing the melting of snow, seeing the piano on the top of the hill and me on top playing it. That dream came true: I played the piano in Aspen on top of the mountain, I saw that as a kid. I had visions of my future. I do know that if I continue the way I have gone so far, that my hopes are that people will see me as some like the great musicians I admire."

When asked how she would ideally want people to describe her once she is sixty Dena replies, "As people see for example Shirley Horn, as a great musician, always growing, and learning about music, always feeling inspired, even at old age. I want to be remembered as a real musician-singer, not as someone having a bunch of fans. John Coltrane and Miles Davis were ground breaking, but I would like to be remembered as someone who brought happiness, and made people enjoy music, inspired people and joining the great musicians. I think with this idea good things in your career come. I would want to be remembered as a good musician, working hard, encouraging people, contributing something genuinely."

Changes in the cultural and professional world and their impact

Dena feels that there are less opportunities to perform in the jazz world. The decreasing economy is felt, for example when she made her last CD, which appeared with less instruments than she would have preferred. She is worried about the budget cuts in music in schools, although the interest in music is to her idea not declining. However: "The *Idol* culture is terrible. Everybody thinks he or she can sing. That is not the real thing. These kids are encouraged in a kind of false way."

The lessened opportunities for her to perform have also to do with the fact that she has moved to another level of career; "once you start travelling you cannot take gigs that are offered you at home. I am trying to get concerts. That level is smaller

and smaller. I do not want crappy little gigs. In different states of the USA there are jazz societies, consisting of groups of people that pay for membership, and with this money put together a concert series. Those jazz societies are mainly funded by the members. When they lose income, it is all over. This year two different Jazz Societies cancelled my concerts because of that. It is tough. This summer I noticed it. I had much less to do than during the years before. That is not how I keep growing. I have then to teach more, which is not good, because I need that balance between playing and teaching. Playing and teaching is my career. They both feed off each other, and learn from each other. And you are teaching an audience! You need the stage in order to grow as well."

Dena's pathway

"In some ways I used to think that a void was that I did not have a top education. I did not go to a top university. I used to think that that was bad. Now I realise that I had a different path of learning. It suits me: I like to learn things on my own. My dad was the same way, nobody taught him construction, he just did it. When I see young musicians in New York getting picked up by a huge record company and a huge agent, whether they make it to be a start or not, that break, that is how I learned. If I had been given such a big break I might have learned quicker or maybe not, you will never know. Growth-wise, knowing how I am and how I learned… I have been lucky to have quite strong support. Maybe that is even better than at some moment having one big break. Because then they will tell you everything you need to do, and that is not real growth. So my life's path is my life's path and I grow because of it, not because I did not get certain breaks or financial backing. In fact my very first recording was enabled financially by someone who believed in my talent. I learned so much from that first recording! Looking back I think those big breaks that certain people get can pigeon-hole them and keep them in a certain box, not allowing them to grow. I can keep growing and developing. That in itself is an important learning process for me. One day I wanted to be a big star, now I understand that it is more about a long road of growth and that jazz is something you learn your whole life long."

Interview held September 29, 2005 in Groningen

1 Big tapes, preceding the later cassettes.
2 The family went to the Catholic Church.
3 Like vibraphone, marimba, xylophone.
4 In grade 6 and 7 grade Dena played in the Junior Orchestra, for grade 8 through 11 in the Youth Symphony Orchestra.
5 The year of graduation.

6 A compilation of a lot of jazz songs.
7 Harmonic changes are meant here.
8 The North Netherlands Conservatoire changed its name in September 2005 into 'Prince Claus Conservatoire'.

Sean Gregory

Sean Gregory works as a composer, performer and creative producer throughout the United Kingdom and overseas. He leads collaborative arts projects for all ages and abilities in association with many British and international orchestras, opera companies, theatres, galleries and arts-education organisations. Sean is Head of Professional Development at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in London and Artistic Director of Guildhall CONNECT. These innovative programmes embrace a number of partnerships exploring ideas and approaches which aim to develop new modes of good practice in the field of creative and participatory music-making, as well as inter-disciplinary and transcultural arts practice. A wide range of projects provide opportunities for participants to develop individual creativity, to extend forms of performance practice both within and outside the Guildhall School and to foster a shared understanding between people from different cultural backgrounds. Central to Sean's work is the facilitation and development of new ensembles (from 3-piece to 30-piece) with line-ups that include vocals, strings, wind, bass, rhythm sections, non-western instruments and technology.

There was this totally visionary statement on a little leaflet on the musician of the future. One of my teachers told me, 'it looks totally impossible and idealistic but this is absolutely something for you Sean!'

Born in 1966 in a suburban part of South West London as the oldest son of a policeman and a nurse, Sean Gregory spent his youth in London. A brother was born 20 months after him. Sean went both to primary school and secondary school in London.

In 1984, when he was 18 years old, in a small way his life turned upside down: his parents decided to move to Bournemouth. The move came up suddenly. Sean still had to do his A levels, and his brother his O levels[1] at that time. He did this whilst moving to Bournemouth. "We felt uprooted leaving our friends and our home. But we moved and together my brother and I got a job at the beach. Actually it was liberating, our parents became much less worried. My brother and I shared a room that summer and we stopped arguing forever."

Sean's mother died of cancer in August 2002, after having fought the illness for ten years. It still remains a shock for the family. His father is still alive. Sean's brother is in a creative field of work as well: he works as a graphic artist and lives in the South of London. Sean has a good relationship with his brother and father.

Music during childhood and adolescence

Music was always there. Sean's parents bought a piano when he was six years old.

"Mum played a bit and taught us the basics. The key thing was that they (the parents, RS) both loved music. They had an all-round taste. Classical, pop, jazz, show music and so on."

From age 7 till 11 Sean got piano lessons with a piano teacher living across the road and after that from a few other local teachers. He remembers his time at primary school as very inspiring: activities took place like classroom music-making (although there were no 'formal' music lessons) and drama. Sean describes the school as 'forward thinking from a holistic point of departure', where storytelling, movement and theatre all had its integrated place. The creativity through drama was a big thing in the school. "We created our own plays and built music into the plays. It was an encouraging environment, it shaped me. Even in the primary school drama groups I created silly little bands with biscuit tins. I already was an organiser from a rather early age." Many performing arts activities were organised outside school time, including weekends, in a non-formal way. The teachers were very encouraging. Sean regards them as influential in his development.

In secondary school instrumental lessons were offered as well, and next to the piano Sean chose the flute as a second instrument. Not many people played music in Sean's environment and he was regarded as someone that just enjoyed music-making: "I had a lower middle class suburban upbringing where you did lots of things and music was one of them."

But nevertheless: "For a little while there was this idea that I was a natural talent. I then had an awful experience: a teacher, obviously an expert working with talented youngsters, gave me a test, aural, sight-reading and so on. As a result of this process I felt a failure and was crying at the end. I must have been 11 or 12 years old. My parents were embarrassed. The message from the session was obviously that I was not a natural talent. What a musician was, was apparently defined by a certain concept, certain preconditions." Sean does not know whose initiative this had been. "When we were young I always thought my brother was more naturally talented. He is very musical."

Sean's parents remained encouraging and supportive, fulfilling a special role. Sean describes it as "something they did not force, but offered as an opportunity. Music required commitment. You needed to practise if you take music."

Sean's father did not play any instrument. But "he has a spirit about him which is very musical. He has a very artistic sensibility and a passion for music, not intellectualised, just a love for it. Dad wanted to hear me play popular tunes as well as classical music. Both mum and dad loved good music. Actually they represented both the 'vernacular and the vertical'.[2] There was no value or judgment added to my music-making. It was based on response and feeling." Although his parents were strict and there were sometimes difficult times with them, he feels they were always nurturing, encouraging his personal development.

When Sean was 13 years old his mother applied on his behalf to some music colleges to be a Saturday student.[3] Sean auditioned for the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, the Royal College of Music and Trinity College of Music, all in London, in the end getting into Trinity College. Auditioning was quite an experience. "The audition at the Royal College was terrible. Nobody spoke to me. The Guildhall was friendly. But after auditioning at both schools I felt 'I do not think this is for me'. But then came the audition at Trinity; I played and they then asked me if I had ever improvised or composed. I had not really. This woman who asked was Lettice Stewart, the head of the Junior School. She basically got me to improvise on the piano. It just happened." This was a very positive experience for Sean: an interview, where, rather than having to prove yourself, turns into something which enables you to make a discovery about yourself.

"Going to 20 Mandeville Place in the centre of London once a week by a 20 minutes train ride was a big thing for me. It had a huge impact. London became and remains my home and soul. Going to these lessons and having experiences with good teachers, it was fantastic. Junior Trinity had an amazing mix of people from all kinds of backgrounds, where talent and potential counted in the first place."

Sean got a grant from the local authority to pay for his tuition at Trinity College. He was in his third year at secondary school when he started. The most important experiences for him were the 'musicianship classes'. "A lot of the teachers asked me to improvise and to bring a new composition in every week, to further develop in the class. Those classes were mini workshops, interacting and playing as a group. We were with about 10 pupils. Sometimes we tried out compositions all together with our instruments. That was really inspiring, your ears and eyes were always being opened to new possibilities." Trinity College was a creative and inspiring environment, where Sean felt at home and was allowed to develop. Sean was at Trinity's Junior School from the age of 13 till 18. He finished there in 1984 at the same time as completing his A levels.

Secondary school was a boys grammar school, where Sean got in with a scholarship, but "There was not much music. Singing hymns was the main thing." Sean found the traditional group music-making at secondary school terribly boring. He did not like the over prescribed singing in a choir or playing in an orchestra.

Things changed however when a new music teacher was appointed, Roger Askew. He had a broad view on music education and changed a lot of things. "He introduced proper music in the curriculum; in the end I did my O levels and A levels through him. I was the only one doing music, the rest did it as an 'extra'. He encouraged me to get ensembles going, jazz groups and rock bands. I did all of that combined with my Trinity experience. At the age of 14 and 15, I started teaching myself the guitar and drums, due to a deep interest in the Beatles and the nineteen sixties. That became my real aural training. I was copying, picking things up, learning from books."

Sean observes that a lot of the young people he works with at present, although often learning an instrument formally, use instruments they have learned themselves when playing in creative ensembles.

Decision for the profession

The decision for music as a profession made itself. Sean did not assume he was going to do music, but Roger Askew advised him to apply for a degree level in music. This surprised Sean: "I was not an academic type of musician, nor a traditional musician. It did not appeal to me to spend three or four years basically just playing your instrument and being solistic at conservatoire level." However, Askew told him he could take courses in which he could combine things like composition and collaboration in other art forms. That was important information for Sean. He finds it special that his teacher seemed to understand him so well, while he himself was an Oxford academic. "Him, Trinity, my parents being encouraging; it all helped me take this decision."

Study at Bath Spa University College…

"I heard of Bath through an older friend from Trinity who went there; he told me about the flexible curriculum they had. I visited the place, and felt positive. I entered Bath Spa University College in 1984, taking a Bachelor of Arts in Music." Sean loved it there, it was a small college, 'very rural and out of the city'. First he lived on a campus, then in his second year he moved to Bath. The staff included George Odam[4], who ran the Composition Department and the teacher training course. He was one of his teachers in composition. "He was pioneering. The school in Bath had one of the first composition courses where you composed for professional musicians. They came in and you talked to them. That was innovative and encouraging for work in cross-arts and other collaborations. I got a good foundation there. You could make a lot happen. I did free improvisation, jazz, classical, folk, pop, rock. It was a brilliant environment, with an amazing mix of staff with pioneers on the composition and improvisation side and good educators between them."

The curriculum offered three key areas, performance, composition and history & analysis. In the third year Sean specialized in composition. There were improvisation classes, but also stylistic harmony and counterpoint and studio and electronic work as well. "At the time it was quite special and unique. Every week I also had a one-to-one piano, flute and composition lesson. You were constantly getting attention. I was happy with that." The assessment was traditional: "I do not remember it being heavy. It was rather predictable. You had to jump through a number of hoops."

Yet after this three year's degree course Sean still did not know if he would 'end up in music'.

…start of the journey at the Guildhall School

After graduation in 1987 Sean stayed in Bath for a year. That season was a year of working, mainly teaching. "I taught, played and composed a bit. But then I realised I did not want to be a classroom teacher or an instrumental teacher. I knew that if I would do this all the time I would be bored. So I had to move on."

Sean then heard about the *Performance and Communication Skills* postgraduate course at the Guildhall School in London. George Odam knew Peter Renshaw[5], the founder and developer of this course, who was leading it, and advised him to apply. "There was this totally visionary statement on a little leaflet on the musician of the future. One of my teachers told me 'It looks totally impossible and idealistic but this is absolutely something for you Sean!' The audition was fun: part of it was a workshop and I felt empowered. It was an incredible experience. I knew: this is my thing. I was sure of that. If necessary I would apply again and again to get on it. That was the start of my journey."

Sean started the PCS postgraduate course in September 1988. "It was amazing. We had a group of 16 students in our year. It was like being in a mini company, three days a week for one year. The year was divided into blocks, dealing with skills like workshop leading, percussion, voice, improvisation, and group composition. There were project blocks as well, all six weeks long. In each block you focused on a particular project. Then you started to get placements at different places and in different contexts. We worked in music theatre contexts and with contemporary dancers. We were improvising, coming up with our own ideas and always worked in groups. Through the year we had to make self-assessment profiles, quite new at the time, having to do your own personal development in reference to what you did. We then had a group discussion, a peer-assessment and then a final assessment. I loved it, though some people hated it."

…and the start and development of the career

Sean got his diploma in 1989. Since then he has had a career of approximately 16 years. First he taught the recorder and flute in primary schools in London, just to earn money, "getting the experience having tough kids. I cut my teeth and started changing things; I tried to get them to do something collectively musically."

In 1990, through Peter Renshaw, Sean got a *Composer in Residence* job in Stamford in Lincolnshire. He could do his own composition work there and run educational projects. One and a half year later, in 1991, he had his defining moment. Renshaw offered him a job at the Guildhall School, as part-time PCS administrator, together with some teaching. Next to that Sean started to work in London as a freelance musician and workshop leader, doing a lot of educational projects with different organisations, orchestras, dance companies etc. This went on till 1998. "Outreach or education work it was called, with as underpinning principle group music-making activities which involved creating your own music."

In 1998 Sean became a full-time employee at the Guildhall School as 'Coordinator of Ensemble and Community Development'. Peter Renshaw was still head of the department. In 2003, two years after Peter's retirement, a department of Professional Development was created. "I became head of that and that is my main thing now." Peter Renshaw has always been a sustained influence for Sean. Sean describes him as a great mentor role model, having strong ideas and vision, without imposing them on other people.

Reflecting on the education and life span

In general Sean feels satisfaction with his education: "Every institution I was in, primary and secondary school, Trinity, Bath, the Guildhall, somehow they gave me enough space to do what was important for me. The value of institutions is that they are always there as a sort of grounding force, as a reference point. You can even rebel against them! The important framework for me was that I could be creative and was encouraged. There were always one or two people who were good for me and who were pushing me in the right way, by conversations or asking questions. I met them through these institutions."

Sean feels that his teachers have all been mentors in different phases of his life. "They were mentors, not so much role models. I just came across them. Some of the people are still there, like Peter and George (Renshaw and Odam, RS). Maybe it has to do with my journey; these different people were there for me as *signposts*. I was never made to feel a failure. That is a big one. Nothing ever was allowed to dampen the spirit."

Nevertheless, if Sean had to shape a new conservatoire, things would change. "I would redefine the core business: what to develop, how to be an effective musician. Not just in the technical sense, but in the interpersonal sense and communicative sense; your role and potential in society. I would have another approach for skills development. That includes a decent understanding of how harmony, rhythm etc. works, but the theoretical subjects would be connected to your own development. It would be more relevant, in order to develop your innate musicianship**.** Technology, the void in my life at this moment, is really important for musical training as well. Everything needs to be shaped out of who the student is. My ideal institution must find out about the student. You accepted that person in the first place, so it is your responsibility immediately to find out how best to nurture this student. You recognise the potential, so you should not run purely prescriptive courses. The real chats with students in conservatoires always happen too late, when students are nearly leaving."

Sean observes connections between his own life span and personal career span. For example: "I was in the scouts from the age of 8 till 18; I got little assignments and I was made leader of different groups. That gave me confidence and self-esteem. Through that sort of experience I learned to take initiatives. I set up camps, I

arranged trios at school, started a debating group etc. Wherever I could take an initiative… it was important."

He considers turning points in his life so far: "I made an emotional decision one year ago; I broke up with my partner, I was not ready for a family. Before that I always took the easy option, not to upset people, but I learned not to do that anymore and start to get clearer. I have the feeling that I have to take one or two more decisions like that. If you want things to happen you need to take destiny in your own hand."

His mother's death was another turning point which Sean is still processing. "I had a strong relationship with her. She was a real mentor. The whole family thing really became important. It is with me."

Learning as a musician…

"I never thought of stepping out of the traditional pathway. I benefited a great deal from it. It was not the driving force but a big contributing factor to my involvement with music." Reflecting on his formal learning in music Sean perceives most of what he did 'by road'. "I systematised it. My formal training meant training my ear, eyes, or my hands to do what you had to do to get by when jumping through hoops. I am pleased that I did it. It has been a gateway into other things. Maybe otherwise I would not have been here right now."

Sean feels that nevertheless his development as a musician has mainly come through non-formal settings and informal learning: "you feel ownership; you feel engaged with it."

In connection with his work as head of Professional Development at the Guildhall School he thinks about it a lot. "We need more people having these skills to activate music-making in different contexts, but how do you train that? I realise the reason I developed is just by experiencing it, by listening and being aware. It cannot be quantified."

He finds himself thinking about the craftsmanship of leadership, of the roles of musicians that are needed alongside the craftsmanship of the classical musician. "There are better ways of understanding and internalising the notion of harmony for example than how it is currently being taught. You cannot deny people these things. I do feel that there are better ways to enable people to learn musically. It is important to connect to what is already there."

…and on the job

Sean finds richness in a variety of learning environments ranging from mainstream to special needs. "I learned a lot in terms of people-based learning. In certain situations I become very self critical, thinking twice about it. There is something incredibly honest about those special environments; some of them sort of see through you, meaning things that you take for granted that will happen do not always happen."

Issues of working with other disciplines, other cultures and language lead to a rich learning background. "A West African musician sings at you and communicates through gestures and you find something to give back. A sort of primal source of sound in music, rather than something that is contrived. It works."

Recently Sean has been doing work with actors at the Guildhall School. "Musicians and actors together, that has been my latest learning curve. Actors are used to improvising; whole personalities are involved. It throws up a lot for the musicians." Sean organises specific evaluations over these new developments. "We talk about risk-taking and awareness that there is no right or wrong." He finds that students recognise more and more the reality and relevance of these issues for their training and development.

Oil stain of this work – ending up in Africa

Initially through the British Council supporting students of the Guildhall School in Tanzania who were working with local musicians, Peter Renshaw started a programme where West African musicians came in yearly to work with students in the Continuing Professional Development Programme. "Now we work in Gambia as well, we offer placements to students every year. Students come back with amazing experiences, through percussion, dance, singing, improvising with their own instruments and then apply it to their own work. It is especially the context thing again: the experience in that space and time, and what you pick up. It is a sensibility that leads to your own personal development. How you then transfer that back into your own practice. It is a big one!"

L'art pour l'art and social inclusion

Sean has developed a lot of work which is connected to social contexts. Can he enjoy making music just for doing it or is the contextual dimension (elderly people, sick children, schools, special needs etc.) critical for him? "In order for something to happen, it has to have meaning. That can have to do with the people in the room or the place where you are going to take the music to. So the context the music is happening in is an important factor. But it is always artistically driven." People he meets and talks to are central to his involvement in music. "To be in a room filled with sound, which can provoke emotion and feeling in you, or draw something out of you, or which you can use and shape to create magic with as well. I think the journey is about what moves you and what makes you tick and what drives you to keep going with it."

Sean tries to develop an antenna for what is fit for a purpose for a particular moment. It is a constant learning process. "The roles can differ. You can be a leader, a facilitator, a composer, arranger, a supporting instrumentalist, you can be the person who just makes it happen; you can shift roles. Artistically it comes back to this trying to capture both the essence and the practice of this work, what it actually

is, without putting it into a box, and at the same time defining it enough so that it stops being just called 'outreach' or 'educational and community work'. The principle is the notion that you are with a group of people, that you encourage them to come out with their own ideas. At the same time there is a great need to deepen that practice, for example in schools and with young people in non-formal situations. It is also important with regard to collaboration with other arts disciplines or collaborations with other cultures. The notion of exchange is important. The key part is that together you develop something into something else. That can go for young children with no skills whatsoever or a highly trained dancer or a West African musician, searching and exploring new meeting points, new languages and possibilities."

Motivation

At the question what his strongest motivation is to do what he does, he thinks for a long time and then says: "Sound. There are many answers, in the moment answers, who you are with or the project you are on, and a longer term projection. Where the world is at now, things need to be said through music, through sound in the first instance. But I also think and feel that many things are not said as yet through music. Saying things through music can contribute to how people interact, to how people feel about themselves, view themselves as individuals, and how they interact in groups. That is achieved through the fundamental organisational means of sound, like rhythm, harmony, textures whatever. They are steered, created and manipulated even in response to what is needed at that moment. It is a very fine line then, a delicate balance between the artistically and intellectually driven side, but there is a spiritual and therapeutic side of that as well. It sits within those two things. One should not exist without the other. That is my primary motivation. I have this projection in my mind, realised in different ways at different times."

The different worlds of music

Music from the sixties became important to Sean. "Especially the Beatles. I love their music. They were a social phenomenon. They were role models. I still do not tire of that role model, what they were, who they were, the music they created, being in the right time and place, a representation of what life is about. The natural sort of life span they went through, from their early naïve days, their developmental period to their sort of exit strategy, starting to do their own thing and move on. Many other musicians from that time inspired me a great deal. There is a kind of chemistry in music of that time."

It is the folk-based side of music-making that fascinates him. "I am not a folk musician. But it is this phenomenon, the notion of a group of people getting together who create music which does something for them. Often music that is created in that moment rather than written down on a page is very strong, although

I love both. This notion of people who have something to say there and then, as a group of musicians through their instruments, appeals to me. Even if they are not that technically brilliant, it is still possible to offer something, a pop song, an amazing collaboration in education, a meeting of minds in Africa, or whatever. It is a manifestation of the moment rather than something that is sustained for the sake of keeping a tradition alive."

Development of iO, leading to communities of practice

Essential for Sean during the development of his career was the cooperation with his colleagues, who were influential. "There is a little wave of people I grew up with[6], lead with and make music with, we come all to the age where we start to define our pathways a bit more." From 1997 until 2002 Sean ran *iO*, together with these musicians, a large 30-piece band, which became a major defining force for him. "Some of us were saying that some wonderful music has been produced the last 10 years, but it never gets heard again, so we wanted to produce our own work that was not only regarded as educational." They made some live recordings of their work. "It was a great experience, we got good gigs. It deeply affected us and a lot of friendships and new projects in different combinations came out of it." Sean does not think that they will do it again in that shape or form, but interesting ensembles and projects have emerged as a result of working together in *iO*. "It really developed. That is another side that I want to keep developing. A *community of practice*, that is exactly what I mean."

A role model in leadership: Arsenal's trainer

Sean loves football. He creates space in his life for the London football club Arsenal, being a season ticket holder and he sees parallels between music and sport. "I love the social side of football, and the philosophy behind it. The way Arsenal's manager Arsène Wenger works is an example for me. He has a holistic view, he revolutionised the training in the UK. He sees football players as human beings and works on self awareness, on working in teams, on youth policy." Ars1ene Wenger is a role model for Sean. "He is a real leader, leading from behind as a genuine coach and mentor. He built up a great team of players, built a whole new training compound, and a new 60.000 seater stadium will be opened in 2006. All with support, good food and attention for well being. I reflect on that and it inspires me."

Longer term aims

A certain dream for the future has never left him: he would love to be involved with running 'a special place'. No doubt with the Arsenal model of Arsène Wenger in his mind, Sean describes it as "a centre that embraces musical training from a young age till the profession; it is about lifelong learning and also about producing new

work, in a way which the professional sector could not do because they are tied down to their market niche. This is about the real world of training, research and reflection completely integrated. It is something for everyone where the formal and non-formal can meet. It starts from scratch and gets built up. It will manifest itself via something like Guildhall, or maybe via a combination of organisations. This is a holistic ethos which I believe is achievable through organisations and key people working together. It would produce an enabling framework which acknowledges the approaches, disciplines, styles and genres that are traditionally there. It embraces the notion of research and development and literally reaching out into the wider sector. I really want to be involved with leading something like that."

Sean finds it hard to achieve a balance between all the things he is doing. "I always have too many things on the go with different priorities at different times. I want to do more practical work, but not more of the same. I would like to think more of my own creative work and development." Another area in which he feels a burning need is writing. He would like to produce a book, consisting of a compilation of the materials he has developed: "a written description and a musical description. Hopefully those two might tie up."

In the UK there is an increasing interest in the work he is doing. "Time will tell if it is just a phase, due to government changes. But I think there is a momentum now for music as a participatory experience to have a wider resonance in society."

Budget cuts in the arts are an issue in the UK as they are everywhere. A tough time could be ahead. On the other hand Sean feels that terrific developmental work is going on, but it is caught in educational and outreach work. "Sometimes orchestras do this kind of work, doing an outreach programme, but it is not really affecting the practice in the artistic direction of the orchestra itself. They use it to sell themselves. There is nothing wrong with that, but you also need to respond to the dynamic of the people you are with, and that is not questioned."

A way of life

"I am where I am, because I go with the flow, riding the waves. The flow has always been in the right direction. A question in my mind is whether I will need to start to shape and direct things a little bit more and take some tough decisions or one or two risks even, in order to make those things happen. I was fortunate enough to have the right people at the right time and the right opportunities at the right time. The main thing is not to stagnate, not to get stuck. I feel I am still growing. The work and practice continue to grow, change and develop. I feel very lucky to be part of that."

Sean does not perceive what he does as work. "It is not a job. It is a way of life for me. People and socializing are central for me. At the funeral of my mum I felt it

more strongly than ever. That is what life is, you feed off people and you feed something back to them. You do it as long as you live."

Interview held June 16, 2005 in Haren

1 O = ordinary, A = advanced level.
2 Sean refers here to Peter Renshaw's often made quotation in which the 'horizontal', being the vernacular culture, is placed opposite of the 'vertical', being the traditional, and more formally taught, culture.
3 Meaning to take classes in the junior school (preparatory for the conservatoire) on Saturdays.
4 At the time of the interview being co-ordinator of Research and Staff Development at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.
5 Peter Renshaw retired from the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in 2001 as Head of Research and Development. He is currently an arts and education consultant.
6 Sean refers here to fellow students of the Guildhall School.

Manon Heijne

The Dutch soprano Manon Heijne studied at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague with Herman Woltman and Marianne Dieleman. After obtaining her Teacher's Diploma, she also received a Performer's Diploma 'Cum Laude' in 1991. She took masterclasses with singers like Cristina Deutekom and Robert Holl. At the beginning of her career Manon participated as a soloist in a number of special productions, in particular in the area of the music theatre, such as 'Pygmalion' of Rameau, conducted by Sigiswald Kuijken; 'The Hospital' of the Dutch composer Huib Emmer; 'The Photographer' by Philip Glass; 'Tanz-Schule' by Mauricio Kagel, conducted by Reinbert de Leeuw and in Berio's 'Canticum' and 'The Cries of London' (during the Holland Festival). With the Netherlands Opera she performed solo roles in 'Life with an Idiot' (Schnittke); 'Die glückliche Hand' (Schoenberg) and 'Broken Strings' (Param Vir), the latter two productions being staged by Pierre Audi. Manon Heijne regularly performs with the Netherlands Chamber Choir in a great number of concerts, tours and TV/CD-recordings, with conductors such as Frans Brüggen (St. Matthew's Passion and B-minor Mass), Ton Koopman (St. John's and St. Matthew's Passion), Reinbert de Leeuw ('Aus Deutschland' by Kagel and 'Jetzt Immer Schnee' by Sofia Gubaidulina), Uwe Gronostay ('Jeremiae Prophetae') and Eric Ericsson ('Figure Humaine'). She made the first recordings of 'Only Vertical Thoughts 3 and 5' by Morton Feldman with the Barton Workshop. For over ten years Manon was a member of Ensemble 88, which specializes in contemporary music. In 2004 she went to Russia and Hungary with the ensemble, where they performed pieces by Jan Vriend and Ivan Fischer. With the same ensemble she also made a recording with pieces by Vinko Lobokar. Manon Heijne has been a professor in the vocal department of the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague since 1993. She is currently being coached by Ronald Kleekamp.

…It takes 41 years of age to let go of the idea that I can't do it, and a teacher who tells me that actually I can do it. For me this is a real eye opener.

Childhood years

Born in 1964 in Wormerveer (now Zaanstad) Manon Heijne is the oldest child in a family of three children. Her parents, who are still alive and well, both stemmed from a working class background where there was no place for ambitions in the arts: "My mother would have loved to be a professional dancer, and my father has always been crazy about jazz music, but he did not feel up to learning it." They were nevertheless very stimulating and encouraging for their children, who in the end all three got engaged professionally in the arts. Manon's sister, three years younger, became a professional dancer and her brother a pop musician, playing drums and bass guitar.

There was a lot of music going on at home from early on: Manon playing the flute, her sister the piano and her brother the drums, often playing together.

Manon went to a catholic primary school in Wormerveer. Although she learned to play the recorder there, and the school paid attention to performing musicals, in a musical sense it was not especially stimulating.

Playing the flute with her neighbour girlfriend and in church; the children's choir

Manon started playing the flute when she was eight years old and got lessons at the local community music school. The reason why she chose to play the flute had to do with the fact that the girl living next door also played the flute. "She was one year older and one year ahead with everything. I started to play the flute because she did that as well. I did not feel it was my own choice; I just did it because she did. We used to play duos together and gave little performances. We played together every day. Looking back, I think it was quite special and formative. For me it was important and stimulating."

Manon did not particularly like the lessons at the community music school, mainly because she did not feel challenged enough. In general she holds a neutral view on the teachers she had: "they came and went". In the first years after she started she had lessons in a small group, which was not stimulating: "I could hear it was always out of tune; from time to time I was allowed to play solo, but I was not thrilled." The teachers she had were not capable of dealing with that kind of lack of challenge for a gifted child.

Things were different at home, playing with her violin and piano-playing grandfather, with her flute-playing girlfriend next door, and singing solo in church and in the children's choir. Particularly stimulating for Manon was playing in (the catholic) church in Wormerveer. The family was not really religious. "It was more a habit, the culture, the music that appealed to us. When I performed in the church, my parents would come to listen to me." Manon could truly display her musical abilities on these occasions, first through singing, later through playing the flute as well.

From her sixth year she sang in a children's choir, which she liked enormously. The repertoire consisting mainly of Dutch children's songs; "I still have them all". Later, at the age of 14, she went to the youth choir, also liking that tremendously: "We sang gospel and that kind of things. It was great fun, because there were also boys in the choir. Every Saturday morning I rehearsed in this choir. For a long time I first sang in the children's choir from 9 o'clock on, and then switched to the Youth Choir. I did it for years!"

Period at secondary school

Meanwhile, at the age of twelve, Manon went to secondary school, the Michael College at Zaandijk. She started at the Atheneum and then, to avoid difficult

mathematics, switched to HAVO[1]. Her parents tried to persuade her not to do this, but Manon was very persistent, being certain that she wanted to go to the conservatoire and not to be too bothered with school. Later she would regret this switch, not in the least because it made her start at an early age at the conservatoire.

Manon cannot explain her motivation for wanting to go to the conservatoire and become a professional flute player: "I played flute and had lessons for a long time, and I did it well. I thought that I was a real good flautist. Singing… I enjoyed it, but I did not consider it. I just did not think." Manon had neither ideas nor particular considerations at that time about her future as a flautist.

In her last year at secondary school, when preparing for an entrance examination for the conservatoire, it was the director of the community music school, testing her ears, who discovered her beautiful voice, including having perfect pitch[2] and encouraged her to take singing lessons. Manon then received singing lessons from Cornelia van der Horst, and from that moment on things really developed quickly. At that time Manon was fifteen years old. In the end she would not choose the flute, "it just did not fit me".

Once she had decided to sing, it immediately felt natural for her. "It just felt deep. I could not imagine anymore why I would have wanted the flute."

Period at the Royal Conservatoire

In the early summer of 1981 Manon earned her HAVO diploma, and after that took an entrance examination for the conservatoire. She auditioned both in Amsterdam and The Hague and was admitted to both schools, but made her choice for the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague, because there she could have a place with the pedagogue Herman Woltman; an offer she took on the advice of her current teacher Cornelia van der Horst. At the age of 16, Manon was admitted to the first year and started her studies, full of enthusiasm.

Contrary to the flute, Manon knew exactly why she wanted to start singing professionally: "I thought, 'I want to sing and I want to perform'. When I sang *Ave Maria* in the church it satisfied me so much. I got such clear reactions of people when I sang, I loved that kind of interaction."

The period at the conservatoire turned out to be hard. Within one year Manon had lost all her enthusiasm and all confidence in her abilities, due to a lot of pressure.

> I had no clue what was going to happen, but my teacher turned out to be the *ultimate voice freak*. He was such a difficult man. Basically he wanted the best for his students, but he was only concerned with the voice. I came in fresh; I had the main role in the musical *Eliza Doolittle*, just before going to the conservatoire. That was a big success. I had two more performances to go, but he immediately forbade it, stating it was bad for my voice and telling me

> to cancel it. He was very negative. He told me to thank God on my bare knees that I had him as a teacher and not one of his colleagues. He really gossiped. He disapproved of his colleagues, and as a student you became the victim of that. At the same time his personality was unassailable. Actually I found his character distorted. Nobody ever tackled him about the damage he caused. I know colleagues who have had lifelong damage through his behaviour towards them. He already shook his head when you only took a first breath before you started singing. It was not constructive at all. Now my main concern as a teacher is how to make sure that my students keep their own unique identity as a singer, while I am teaching them new knowledge as well. Not deadening them with hundreds of technical demands. I am a perfectionist, he was that as well. So soon I thought, 'you see, I can't do it'. He kept saying to me that there was so much to learn, each lesson again: 'you know nothing, you have a voice, but you have everything to learn'. It made me totally insecure and I lost my confidence. He got to know my parents and immediately started commenting on them to me. Like when I did not feel calm, telling me that I was just like my mother, 'she is so neurotic, it does not surprise me that you are so restless'. He was an anti-pedagogue, a real anti-pedagogue. At a certain moment it became very suffocating. Not just for me, actually for all female students. He could not cope with women students. It felt like he was determined to break us. With male students things went a bit better, maybe it had to do with his homosexuality. In the second year of studies my level was good enough, being basically a really natural singer, but I had lost all my confidence. And I had entered the school as a *diva*! I nevertheless stayed for five years with him, because I still thought that he was the only person who could teach me for the profession. He brainwashed us, telling us that we would all end up as bad singers unless we prevented ourselves taking lessons from one of his colleagues.

At the conservatoire Manon met her future (Belgian) husband, Romain Bischoff, who was a singer as well. "We lived together for two years at that time, and sang a lot, took on a lot of projects and we were very serious about it. We even made a CD." Romain changed teachers during his period of studies and chose Manon's teacher Woltman, despite Manon's advice. The result was that Romain's teacher got furious with Manon, accusing her of persuading his star student to change to her own teacher: "It was terrible, it scared me, because this same man was of course also a judge in juries when I had to sing."

An important part of the curriculum was the group lesson for song interpretation with Meinard Kraak, who before the change was Romain's teacher. "You then sang for other students. Meinard used to teach us about interpretation, each Friday afternoon. For the development of the singers this was important. But there was this

feud between Kraak and Woltman, so my teacher used to say, 'you are not going to sing for this man; he will only finish you'. In the end I perhaps sang five times in this class over these eight years of study. I went there, each week, and I listened of course. This personal feud victimised the students. Looking back it still makes me very angry."

The pianist Liesbeth Hoppen, who accompanied during the lessons, fortunately had a positive influence on Manon. "She really understood what was going on and was supportive."

Examinations were unnerving: "From the first to the second year went well enough, partly because I was still quite naive. But the examination from my third to fourth year was really a low point. I was still very young, and totally without confidence. The director who used to chair the jury did not have control over the situation. I am convinced that such things would not have happened under Frans' directorship.[3] The worst thing was that I considered it a normal situation. I could not compare it with other schools; I just heard that Amsterdam was the same. The jury just said that I was doing well: 'go on girl'. Nobody having a clue how bad I felt. So I kept wrestling, much helped by Romain."

Physical problems just before graduation

Meanwhile physical problems emerged for Manon. Just before her final examination troubles with a too quick working thyroid gland emerged. "My mother was rather agitated by character. So when I felt becoming more agitated I thought it was just a matter of my character and temperament. But at a certain moment it became really grave. I could not sit quietly anymore, I slept very badly for a very short time. Actually through a normal hormonal check-up these problems came into the open. It turned out that I had grave problems with my thyroid gland, and I had to take medication for that. The effect for my singing was that actually I could not sing slow pieces anymore, because my pulse went twice as quick as it normally should. Things went really badly from that moment on. It caused enormous problems during my singing lessons, which resulted in a negative spiral. I soon felt better when I started to take medication, and I could normally pass my examination."

Manon did her final examination DM[4] in 1986. She was granted an opportunity for further study for an UM diploma[5], but she temporarily declined from it, mainly because she had no idea how to deal with changing teachers in a polite way. She took a year off, and meanwhile worked in a department store.

Another reason for taking off a year was her health. The problems with her thyroid gland came back; taking medication could last for maximum one year. Manon was now treated with radioactive iodine, which at first did not work well

enough. An operation was not an option, as it was considered too risky for her vocal chords. So again she got iodine treatment, which did work this time. "Since then I take medication, sort of natural hormones. I take it every morning because my thyroid gland does not function anymore." All this was quite determining for two years of her life. Fortunately in the end it has not influenced her voice, but for quite a while she felt quite ill.

After graduation

Manon enjoyed the year out of school, it helped her starting to regain her self-confidence. Nevertheless she wanted to continue her study, and she decided to contact another teacher, Marianne Dieleman. "A lot of Woltman's former students went to her. I took private lessons with her, and when the new season nearly started Marianne just announced that I would be coming back and would not take an entrance examination because I had already been admitted to a graduate course one year ago. In the end I was allowed to study for three more years."

Manon enjoyed her time with Marianne, who was a totally honest and skilled teacher, it was a sheer relief. Manon describes her teacher as a pedagogue who worked intuitively in a very coaching and student-centred way. In 1991 Manon received her performer's diploma (UM) with honour. Meanwhile things also went better in the singing department of the Royal Conservatoire after a new director, Frans de Ruiter, came.

Other teachers

After graduation Manon took a masterclass with the opera singer Christina Deutekom. But opera turned out not to be her passion. A masterclass on Schubert with the singer Robert Holl was more to her liking. She feels strongly about her own lifelong learning: "I cannot understand that some colleagues, because they teach at a conservatoire consider the idea of taking lessons themselves as a degradation."

Nevertheless it is hard for Manon to find teachers she feels comfortable with: "I tend to divide people intuitively in a 'Woltman' person or a 'Marianne' person. When someone reminds me of Woltman it won't work".

At present she has a coach with whom she is totally happy, Ronald Kleekamp. Manon got to know about him through a colleague of the Netherlands Chamber Choir, who feels severely damaged by Woltman. Manon is very positive about Kleekamp: "I feel even addicted to his lessons. I will always leave after my lesson with him with a positive feeling, even if I have not practised enough, or have caught a cold. He gives me the feeling that I can do it. It goes well and he has a good ear. He can work technically in a very skilled way and can be very detailed, always and everything in a very coaching manner and from a genuine interest."

An important influence for Manon was the singer Dorothy Dorow, who made her realise her deep interest in contemporary music. Manon got to know Dorow during

a project on Webern Cantatas when she was in her fourth year: "I loved it and I turned out to be very good at it. We all had to practise a cantata, I did the four Opus 12 songs. There was a final concert where I sang. It gave me real confidence." The workshop with Dorothy Dorow opened her eyes: "I realised I could do it easily, where the other students found it extremely hard. I found the modern music, and it made me extremely happy. It never went away again. Later I had similar experiences in the Netherlands Chamber Choir." Also the lessons of the baroque singer Marius van Altena which Manon received during two years of her studies stood out as a positive experience.

Looking back at the period at the conservatoire

Manon finds, with a few exceptions, like the workshop with Dorow and the lessons with Van Altena, that she did not learn much at the conservatoire; it did not challenge her at all. Her big frustration is that at the time she studied, there was no attention whatsoever on the individual abilities of the students. "I was with other singers in an ear training group, but I could do it all. I did not feel challenged at all. I just did not learn anything new. The general level of aural skills of the singers was so low that I asked for another group and finally I succeeded to join a group of guitarists and pianists. The fact that singers often have a beautiful voice but have little other musical skills does not release the school from setting individual goals with gifted students, who need to be challenged."

Manon realised that she went in the first place for a while to the opera class after graduation, because she still felt quite shy and inhibited. But opera was nothing for her. She stopped singing in the opera class once she got more engagements in the Netherlands Chamber Choir.

She now sometimes sees her own former shyness back in her students, knowing they will have to deal with it, like she did in the end.

Manon realises that she was very critical on herself. "I am an enormous perfectionist; I was that even at a very young age. Woltman definitively helped me give shape to my voice; I must grant him the credit for that. He probably had an idea of how to enable my development, but because of my perfectionism that part of me was enlarged enormously, that I kept thinking 'indeed, I cannot do this, and I am unable to do that, and I am neurotic on top of it!' I missed personal help; I think that there was a lack of people signalling things, like perhaps a coordinator or a student counsellor. I thought it was normal, I saw everyone having the same problems. Nobody took notice of me. People like my teacher, they have such big egos, they are inviolable. There was no room for my own development in that sense. I had to find out everything myself, and to fight for everything myself. I always kept my poker face, people did not notice that. They thought it was okay with me, except at a certain point when they heard me sing. You can't hide your unhappiness while you are singing."

Personal life - marriage and divorce - children

Manon married Romain, and in 1993 their son Boris was born. The marriage did not last and the couple divorced in 1995. Manon got a relationship with Frans de Ruiter, director of the Royal Conservatoire and they got two children, their daughter Fee in 1997 and their son Roemer in 2000. In 2001 Manon and Frans got married.

Music plays a crucial role in Manon's life: "It has become part of my personality, I do not even listen so much to CDs or whatever, but music is always in my head. I am always singing or humming. I can't imagine having problems with my voice, it would give me the feeling of losing part of my personality. Singing is just central to my life."

Her children are engaged in music in a different way than she used to be: "When I look back to my own youth I can only remember that I always wanted to be a musician and my sister a dancer. My parents took that for granted. They were actually amazed that it took my brother a longer time to make up his mind about a profession in music. My children are different; they are not so outspoken as I was at a young age. I try to stimulate them to make music, but I do not find it important whether they will be professional musicians or not. I just want them to enjoy it. I want my daughter to have the feeling that she does well in music, that she can do it. She should not experience music as something difficult but as something that gives a lot of joy."

Professional development, a portfolio career

From 1990 on Manon got a lot of work in the Netherlands Chamber Choir. In that year she gave 56 concerts. She has always experienced it as very challenging: "Music-making on a very high level. Be there at 10 o'clock on Monday morning and be at your best. Always having to be professional. Some people find that hard, I learned it, both through practice, and because I am a perfectionist. You have to know your score, your voice has to be in order. No bleating about the early hour. It has to be okay, always. So, yes I had to practise, because your voice must work, period."

Stylistically Manon learned a lot by working with conductors like Brüggen, Herreweghe and Koopman: "Singing the *St. Johns* with Brüggen, for the fifteenth time; sheer heaven!"

Manon's career developed in a prosperous way. One year after graduation she started to work as a co-teacher in the singing department. Within performance she did a lot of work in modern music, like with a percussion ensemble consisting of colleagues of the conservatoire, in the Netherlands Chamber Choir, in the Netherlands Opera under the charismatic guidance of the cellist Rostropovich, with the conductor Reinbert de Leeuw and the composer Mauricio Kagel. She feels that these kinds of projects really formed her as a professional musician. "This is why I made so much progress as a singer and musician."

For many years Manon sang in *Ensemble 88*, which collapsed after a conflict. Manon regrets this, because the work in the ensemble, where the musicians performed only music of living composers, has always been very challenging and rewarding for her.

She does not go out to find solo work: "I just accept what comes on my path. I find it very hard to cope with three children and a husband who is very engaged in his work. When I have a demanding concert it costs me a lot of energy. I find it hard to keep asking favours of other people, like taking care of the children." Sometimes she regrets that she cannot take on more work, but she tries to find a satisfying balance.

Her perfectionism takes its toll here as well. Manon wants to deliver top quality, at any time. "Last September I had a concert in Amsterdam, an extremely difficult piece of a contemporary Dutch composer, Jan Vriend. I had already performed it a few times but I kept thinking 'I can't do it, it is too hard for me'. On the other hand I wanted to do it very much. In the last three weeks of the summer holiday I practised so hard, I have never worked so hard. I took some singing lessons as well. I thought, 'when I take this concert on, I need to do it technically perfect'. And working so hard, it improved enormously. So every morning I practised and did sports. Sometimes my children asked me to do something with them, and then I had to say: 'I have to practise, I just have to!' Then, at some point, in a weaker moment, I thought, 'This is crazy'. But once I was standing there I got this great artistic satisfaction, and I thought, 'This is the best'."

Manon reduced her job at the Royal Conservatoire from 20 to 12 hours a week, finding the combination of singing in the chamber choir, teaching, travelling and taking care of a family too much. "When it is too much, it makes me ill, I can't cope then. You have to see your students weekly, you have to rise early for your children. As a singer you really need seven and a half hours of sleep. It hardly ever happens and that is not good for your voice."

Learning as a musician

Manon has 'perfect pitch', which means that she does not have to learn the notes of the score. However, it is a disadvantage as well: "I need to be on guard that I will not *pitch*.[6]" Also singing in a different tuning system is a real problem. It is hard for her to read different clefs. When singing in an ensemble Manon can feel quite reserved. She can only let go and give everything during the actual performance. "I don't know why that is the case. There are actors who just jump into it from the very first day. I always keep my reserves, I don't know why, perhaps because basically I find it more exciting. People I work with often know this about me. But it is not always easy. I sang a piece by Ivan Fischer for example. We were preparing it for a concert in Hungary. I had to force myself to give everything beforehand, because he did not know me, and suddenly I was scared that if I would not do it, he

would think 'what kind of a singer is this?' I have to force myself in such a case. I don't know what is at the basis of this. Somehow I am shy, but it has also to do with the tension of that very moment. I love the idea that I will be doing things which I have not thought over before."

Artistic learning happens in a quite analytical way: "I analyse the score, vertical basically, not especially looking at my own line." Manon learns a lot from her fellow musicians, especially by listening to the tone colours of other instruments and trying somehow to match her voice with that. "In Ensemble 88 there was a clarinet player whom I could match with magnificently, he played with a wonderful sound. We responded to each other musically in order to find beautiful colours."

Singing in the Netherlands Chamber Choir is very demanding: "It is very complicated not to lose yourself there as a singer and not only just to mix with others. The fact that singing in the choir is demanding is both great as well as frustrating. I pretend it is all great fun, which actually it is, but on the other hand colouring within the choir, and all those issues connected to that, it is at the same time a snake pit. I have a voice that does not mix so easily, it is quite penetrating. It is always a big fight in myself. You must not be there too much, nor be too modest. You have to sing well, but not too outspoken or too much as a soloist. I am really sweating to keep things in hand. That is heavy. I have often had negative thoughts about it. But the positive matters overcome the negative matters. I know what it requires to sing in this choir. I am often amazed that singers who come here for auditions do not have a clue, that they do not know how hard it is, and consider choir singing basically as lower on their hierarchical ladder of musical performance. People who think, 'I can always become a choir singer if my solo career fails'. Whereas I am more sweating while singing in the choir than being on the stage on my own."

Further development of career

Looking back, Manon is satisfied about how her career has developed until now: "Actually I have never been very ambitious, although many people told me that I should be more ambitious. I never took part in a competition. It is okay as it is. When I started in my career I would never have thought that I would be able to work at such a high level. I often think that I can still do a lot of things, and that makes me happy. If I look at other singers who really plan their career, I often realise all the costs and then I wonder what the use of it is. I have never been ambitious to have a top career. My former husband was always very stressed about every matter of his career, I realised that I absolutely did not want that."

Manon is aware that she has also made concessions because she has a family with children. "Look, if I had been very ambitious, I would have done all these things differently, wouldn't I?" She feels that her choices are really her own choices.

She feels challenged to do new things, like singing Schumann and Schubert. "I have done it, but it means you really have to organise your concerts to make a living out of it. I love Bach, but I do not feel like singing lots of St. Matthew Passions in the provinces."

Manon realises that singing in the Netherlands Chamber Choir also means becoming 'spoilt': "It is such a high level, of repertoire, of conductors and venues where we perform. I am so much a perfectionist; it would drive me crazy to have to sing in a little village with a bad orchestra and bad acoustics. I am too impatient for that."

She is often amazed that students are so ill prepared to the work of, for example, singing in such a choir. "They have no clue, never come to listen to the choir. Singing in a choir is a profession, they do not realise that. It surprises me greatly."

Learning as a teacher

In sharp contrast to the past, the singing department of the Royal Conservatoire is now very active in team-teaching. The teachers were even trained in teaching through a coaching approach. "I learned a lot in that course. But I do not know if I am a real coach. I am doing my utmost to be a coach. I used to be more impatient and impulsive in the past, but I have learned to let go, because that is much better. I learned to keep more distance. I have noticed that it is much better for the student if I don't crawl under her skin or show my vexation if something does not work out. Maybe I can better let go as I become older, and realise that it is very well possible that a student does marvellous things outside the school, which do not especially show during the lessons. I have begun to realise that the principal study lesson is *not* the ultimate moment and that it is very relative. I really had to learn that, which surprises me in itself when you consider my own history at the conservatoire."

Current and future ambitions

Manon is now 41 years old, and on a kind of turning point in her career. She needs to make up her mind how she wants to continue her career and development. She wants to go on with teaching; her ideal is that modern and contemporary music would become more important in the school and that she might play a role in that. She hesitates about her longer term ambitions of performing and considers perhaps singing for a period in the professional Radio Choir.

Many things will depend on how her voice will develop once she gets older: "You can only remain a real soprano until you are approximately 50 years old. In the Netherlands Chamber Choir I am of course considered a middle-aged voice. They keep asking me because they know I am reliable and have qualities they like. But of course they prefer 23 year olds. I started there when I was 23 years old! And that is the reality, because it is a chamber choir, very small, and much depends on that. So I expect that at the latest at the age of 45, it will stop. But nevertheless, I love choir singing."

The urge to sing is strong: "I absolutely do not want to teach only; I need to do both. I would miss the motivation, and I would have the feeling that I would be doing something dishonest: teaching while actually you want to sing. I want to prevent that. I admire colleagues who can cope with that, but I can't."

Changes in the cultural environment

Changes in the cultural environment are definitely noticeable. "There is less money and space in the Netherlands Chamber Choir. Things get harder; you have to give in concerning many things, like singing things that are extremely difficult, and at the same time the level has to keep increasing." Manon also feels that there is change in the level of students; on the one hand the level of the top students has increased enormously, and on the other hand the level of the so-called average student has decreased considerably. She has not a real explanation for it, except the fact that at secondary schools music is not at all an important activity anymore. "When I was in secondary school, that was already at hand, but I had the church. Those times are gone; for me it was very important."

The top students will get employment she thinks, but the level of the average students should rise if they want to gain a place in the profession. "As teachers we can be quite protective, but is it honest in the end? Hardly anyone comes through an audition in the Netherlands Chamber Choir or in the Opera!"

Manon describes herself as an old fashioned musician: "I know about selling your biography, marketing, doing crossovers, but I consider myself doing old fashioned things in a high-quality environment. I don't know if I would want to do a festival here and a festival there, I am not the type for that. I want to work steadily on a high quality product and not to jump from one thing into another."

Her health problems which she overcame made her look at career issues in a more relative way, and she is glad that in the end it was solved.

"It is funny, with my current teacher I am doing French music. He finds that I have a real feel for French composers. I felt that it amazed me, because during my studies I once sang a French song in Meinard's (Kraak, RS) class and he told me that I could not do it at all. So I concluded that I was not good in French repertoire. My current teacher tells me that he likes my pronunciation and my Duparc. So it takes 41 years of age to let go of the idea that I can't do it, and a teacher who tells me that actually I can do it. For me this is a real eye opener."

Interview held October 21, 2005 in The Hague

1 Both being a high school type of secondary school, Atheneum can be compared to grammar school and consists of six years of education, HAVO (Higher General Secondary School) taking five years of study.
2 Meaning the ability to recognise musical pitch without any (harmonic) context.
3 Frans de Ruiter, director in the period of the interview.
4 DM: Teaching Musician, meaning a diploma as a performer with a qualification to teach; nowadays a bachelor's degree, including a teaching qualification.
5 UM: Performing Musician, in the sense of performing showing the qualities to be a soloist, nowadays a master's degree.
6 Going in an abstract way from note to note, without connecting through a harmonic (or other) relationship. This goes especially for modern music.

Joris Teepe

Double bass player Joris Teepe is a world-respected bassist, composer, arranger and teacher. He was born in 1962 in the Netherlands and moved to New York City in 1992. He has recorded eight albums as a leader. Besides working on his own projects he has worked as a sideman for many highly respected musicians, orchestras and groups. Joris earned a Bachelor of Arts in electric bass (1989) and a Master's Degree (1991) in double bass from the Hilversum Conservatoire. After moving to New York he studied with Ron Carter, Peter Washington and others. Since 1993 he has been very active as a teacher, conductor and performer, running workshops in Germany, Brazil, the Netherlands and the U.S.A. Since 2000 he has been a bass instructor for the 'Jazz For Teens' Programme at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in Newark, New Jersey. In June 2001 Teepe was appointed Head of the Jazz Department at the Prince Claus Conservatoire in Groningen. There he developed an innovative educational programme drawing on his American experience and European background. This successful four year college programme unites eight jazz artists from New York collaborating with a Dutch faculty. He has performed and recorded with the Metropole Orchestra (directed by Bill Holman and Vince Mendoza), trumpet players Tom Harrell, Randy Brecker and Brian Lynch; the saxophonists Chris Potter, Don Braden, Steve Wilson, Seamus Blake, Craig Handy and the pianists David Berkman, Cyrus Chestnut, Darrel Grant, Kevin Hays, Kenny Werner and Sam Yahel. He has also worked with drummers Rashied Ali, Billy Hart, Billy Drummond, Ralph Peterson, Gene Jackson, Carl Allen and guitarists Peter Bernstein, Jesse van Ruller and Mike Stern. In addition he has played with trombonists Slide Hampton, Conrad Herwig and Steve Davis; vibes players Monte Croft and Joe Locke and vocalists Andy Bey, Dena DeRose, Judy Silvano and Deborah Brown. 41 of his original compositions have been recorded on sixteen different CD's.

I have a kind of talent which gives me a sense of responsibility. You hear a lot of bad music, I want to change that and add something good.

Learning in childhood

Joris Teepe was born in Rijswijk, the Netherlands, in 1962, the oldest of three children (two sisters were born after him). He spent his youth in The Hague, where he attended primary school and then grammar school.

Joris studied piano privately from the age of six. While initially he enjoyed this, he later came to resent these lessons. At the age of twelve, his parents allowed him to stop piano, but not music altogether. Because one of his sisters played the clarinet he took up this instrument as well. This, too, proved of little interest: "I kept to it for one and a half years, when I nearly threw the clarinet out the window. It annoyed

me to have to hold something in my mouth." At that moment he knew nothing of jazz music, nor did he improvise or compose. "During my childhood I learned only classical music, through my parents and the piano lessons."

Joris' parents saw learning music as essential to a good education. In the circles of their friends this was felt as a natural thing. Although his parents loved music, they did not attend concerts.

It is remarkable that all three children became professional musicians: one sister is a flautist and the other a clarinettist. Later in life Joris' parents became active amateur musicians; his father playing the piano and then the church organ, his mother the cello.

Joris was allowed to end his clarinet playing at the age of fourteen and stopped all active involvement with music. Playing football and billiards were far more appealing. He regarded the clarinet playing and flute playing of his sisters as 'niggling'.

At grammar school none of his friends were involved with music. This changed when he was seventeen and some school friends wanted to start a band and needed a bass player. Joris' parents persuaded him not to take up the bass guitar, but rather the double bass, so that he would also be able to participate in the local youth orchestra (in which his sisters played as well). So he borrowed a double bass and a bow, and found a teaching method. When he arrived at the band rehearsal everybody was very surprised to see him with a double bass and not a bass guitar! Being left-handed, Joris was unable to play a double bass built for a right handed player. After a week he accidentally sat on his bow. "It cost my dad a lot of money. Then I bought a bass guitar from my savings. That was great!"

Joris became totally devoted to his band, which rehearsed in garages. He did not take any lessons. This was in the fifth grade[1] of grammar school, "very late in fact".

He feels that his family's 'classical background' had a negative influence on his life. "Only after the age of 30 was I able to bring myself to listen to classical music. Before that it disgusted me, I found it niggling; it had been forced on me." During his adolescence he felt classical music was for snobbish people, "it was not *cool*." For Joris the challenge was to belong to the 'children of well-to-do parents wearing jeans with holes'. "I only knew classical music and had no idea that you could make any other kind of music. I lived in a decent neighbourhood. For me jazz was associated with drugs and bad neighbourhoods, and I did not want to commit myself to that."

Learning during adolescence

In 1981, after graduating from grammar school, Joris entered Rotterdam University

to read Political Science. Living in Rotterdam he continued to play in different bands. He moved to Amsterdam a year later to pursue his studies at Amsterdam University, largely because the city appealed to him more. Playing more and more, he found he no longer liked his political science studies: "the only thing I wanted was to make music. I played endlessly with my bands."

At this point Joris knew nothing of jazz, performing mainly in the *Rock* and *Ska* styles. While in Rotterdam he encountered the work of George Benson, whose music was a revelation to him. At the age of 22 he started to attend jazz workshops at Amsterdam's Creative Centre (CREA) and began performing in jazz bands.

"One year later I went to the conservatoire. Not knowing that you could study the bass guitar there, I bought a double bass half a year before my entrance examination. This was a big turning point in my life, having never thought during my youth about music as a possible profession. The choice was entirely my own. I knew I was good at it, I loved it, I wanted to develop myself. I just knew: this is what I want, this is part of me."

Learning at the conservatoire

At the time of the entrance examination Joris was determined to become a bass player and to continue performing whether or not he was accepted. He learned that it was possible to play either bass guitar or double bass in the jazz programme. He performed on both during the entrance examination: when given a choice he selected bass guitar, for which he felt better prepared.

At the age of 23, Joris entered the Hilversum Conservatoire[2], though he continued to live in Amsterdam. His bass guitar teacher was Jan Hollestelle, a member of the Metropole Orchestra. He studied double bass as a second instrument with Victor Kaihatu. As he was increasingly asked to perform on double bass, he made this a principal study instrument as well. During his third year as a bass guitarist Joris was admitted to the second year double bass class. From then on he combined two principal studies. In 1990 Joris completed his final examination for bass guitar (DM)[3] and in 1991 for double bass. His final examination for double bass was of such a high quality that he was given the UM diploma as well.[4]

Living in Amsterdam and being enterprising were important ingredients for success. Through responding to auditions in newspaper advertisements, Joris made many professional contacts and performed a good deal in Amsterdam.

Joris describes the period at the conservatoire as a wonderful time, both for the many contacts he made and the example of his teachers. "They were always sitting drunk in the pub, but their love for the profession and their professional attitude were marvellous." Victor Kaihatu, a fabulous player, was a true role model for Joris and turned out to be very influential for his development as a musician.

Joris explains how impressed he was during one of his first lessons: "I wanted to show fast and impressive things to Victor. But Victor just took out a recording of a *ballad*[5] by the Frank Sinatra Orchestra, in which the double bass player played a slow beat. I was so disappointed! But then I realised that he wanted me to understand the function of the bass notes, the *timing*, and the sound. There are so many beautiful things about this one note, who needs virtuosic leaps?"

Victor Kaihatu took Joris to the recording studio, where Joris watched and heard him play the bass guitar in numerous contexts with many different musicians. These included the Vara Dance Orchestra, The Skymasters, musicians Wim Overgauw, Pim Jacobs and Rita Reijs. Kaihatu was more of a role model as a musician than as a teacher. "He was frustrated because to his mind he had not reached the top, hence the booze and hash." In observing fellow students, he saw how mean Kaihatu could be if he felt a student wasn't enthusiastic enough. "He felt justified in scolding, but of course it was not justified."

Joris cannot describe his training at the conservatoire as formal, it is better defined as informal. "You had to be careful to take your lessons in the morning, because in the afternoon they (the teachers, RS) were drunk. I always changed lessons with unknowing first year students." But the enthusiasm and the professionalism of the teachers were inspiring and fulfilling.

"I belonged to a very good group of students: Michiel Borstlap, Allard Buwalda, Denise Jannah, Benjamin Herman. I had a great time with these people for five years. We played a lot together, went on tour with the big band and so on."

Joris finds that he was also well prepared to the profession thanks to his many performance opportunities. He played three times a week at Amsterdam's Bamboo Bar, moving on to the Café Alto. "I did not dare to think of the Bimhuis[6] then!"

Playing frequently and returning home late at night often meant skipping the lessons in the morning, which Joris sometimes regrets. He feels he does not have a sufficient grasp of music history as a result. "I regret that, because there are now many things that I do not know. On the other hand: I wanted to perform! I was ambitious and very fanatic. In my class there was an electric bass guitarist, who left the conservatoire after a year. His teachers told him that he was so talented that he did not need further training. That man is now well-known and has played with many pop artists, including the Rolling Stones. For me those examples were the top. That was the kind of success I wanted as well."

He came to prefer the double bass over the bass guitar, although he still plays and teaches both. Aside from his teachers, primary influences were musicians Joris came to know via recordings. "Ray Brown was for example one of the many double bass heroes I came to know and admire at that time. I later met him and many others. That was super!"

A career in New York

Upon graduation from the conservatoire, Joris obtained a Dutch government scholarship to study in New York, the jazz Mecca. He left on January 1, 1992 "with the idea of going for a few months, but I stayed." Joris describes it as an exciting time, living in a little room with a bed and a double bass. He bought a booklet with the Jazz Clubs in New York, and left every evening in order to hear great music, make contacts and talk to people.

"I was pleased that I had gone alone, because it really forced me to look for contacts, which I would do sitting at the bar, talking to the musicians over a beer." He got support from the saxophonist Don Braden and double bass player Peter Washington. "Peter took me everywhere, and I would listen to him wherever he played. He's a fantastic double bass player and I can never hear him enough. He is one of the three most recorded double bass players and is still my hero." Through the connections he made Joris got engagements. "In those four months I spent at most three evenings in my room."

Joris did not consciously decide to remain in New York, it just happened. Due to his lack of a US residence permit, he shuttled back and forth between New York and the Netherlands for seven years. He describes it as a strange life. In 1999 he finally obtained a green card[7] through the lottery, opening the way for full-time work. He took a teaching job in a pre-conservatoire jazz school in New Jersey.

Joris was happy with the opportunity to remain for good in New York. "At a certain moment I toured in Europe and took American musicians with me. I found it much more exciting to play with them because they focused more on swing and rhythm instead of the 'quasi imposing messing about' typical of Dutch musicians."

He feels that real jazz comes from New York. "That is why I wanted to be there, to understand what made the musicians were so good, allowing them to play honestly and right from the heart. For me, theirs is a true and sincere form of music-making."

Motivation

"You have to prove yourself. That has always strongly motivated me. It might make other people crazy; but for me, on the contrary, it is stimulating." For Joris, this involves showing your worth to the outside world. "You want to have a certain value in your life. At the same time it disturbs me about myself." Joris denies that this is related to his parents' standards. "I have let go of that, although the negative taste of classical music remained for a long time in my life." He never felt a need to prove himself to his parents. "They were enthusiastic when I went to the conservatoire."

Feeling he had to prove himself to his teachers meant he never felt free to ask questions: "I did not want to be caught in my ignorance. So I recorded everything my teacher (Victor Kaihatu, RS) told me and played, and then at home I would sort

everything out." Only during his music training and career did this tendency never to feel comfortable requesting help emerge. "I still find this is my weak point: when other musicians talk about Coltrane's piece with this and that and I do not know it, then I remain silent, and never ask to know more. My character and temperament hold me back."

He considers this a stumbling block, all the more so as his professional reputation has grown ("being a renowned double bass player and head of a jazz department you cannot be someone who 'knows nothing'!")

Joris considers Victor Kaihatu the most influential person in his career. "We talked a lot, this meant he did the talking and I listened. You could never disagree with him. I think that this was also a reason for my not asking any questions. He was not inviting. I thought that what he did as a performer was fantastic. I can easily copy someone. He had so much to tell that I did not regret being 'just' the listener. He was a real master. His way of working was no impediment for me, except that it strengthened my inability to ask questions."

Music is at the core of his identity and life: "I connect it to everything I do and cannot imagine living without it." Hardly anything outside music is of importance, with the exception of his Korean wife Nana (whom he married in 2002) and other family.

Joris describes his life and career development as consisting of a development phase (at the conservatoire, but also the period preceding that), then a 'career phase', in which he played a great deal and made many CDs. His appointment as Head of the Jazz Department of the North Netherlands Conservatoire (currently Prince Claus Conservatoire, RS) in June 2001, while unplanned, is an important milestone. "I thought that at a certain moment I would be sixty years old and ask myself what else I'd have accomplished."

His decision to accept the position in Groningen was not driven by an urge to go back to the Netherlands, although life in New York was always a struggle by comparison. "You see your old friends from the conservatoire leading the easy life, while in New York you'll play for a long evening dressed in a tuxedo simply to earn 50 dollars." Nevertheless he is firm about his determination to stay in New York, his motivation was and is intrinsic.

Learning to compose

At the conservatoire, Joris learned about composition during theory lessons. "There I noticed my imagination. I heard complicated things in my mind but I had no idea how to write them down. One time I wrote a wonderful *Intro*[8], but I had no clue how to continue. It was in my mind, but I did not succeed in giving this shape."

Joris solved this by 'learning by doing', he continued going on until he understood more and more. Again, he never asked for help, preferring to figure everything out for himself.

Learning

Joris does not view this 'not asking' as being an obstacle to learning: "I learn by putting myself in the place of the person who is my example." Role models are of the utmost importance. He compares it to the role parents play.

He learns constantly and feels listening to musicians and watching them is critical. In New York he learned a great deal playing on stage with other musicians. "They just start right off and never ask if you know the piece. If you did not know the music (repertoire and vocabulary RS) you wouldn't dare to join them."

He admits that sometimes he felt a fear of failure. "I took little notebooks to the jazz cafés and wrote down everything that was played. During the day I sorted it all out and learned everything from memory. In the subway I learned all those songs with their chords from the *Real Book*[9] by heart."

Artistically, Joris learned primarily from his teachers and recordings, less from playing with others. "This was especially so when I heard somebody doing things that appealed to me. I love listening to a tape in the car, getting totally excited and continuing to listen even after I have arrived home."

Joris was never very interested with the technical and physical aspects of double bass playing, he does not regard them as very important. "Others can play faster than me. Some are extremely gifted that way. It has to do with how important you find it. I cannot play fast, high and in tune at the same time. Others can do that better, it has to do with the sort of talent you have. Some football players are excellent keepers, but do not have the talent to be in the front line. You can compare it to that. I have a certain style that evolves from my talent. I embrace that."

Joris learned a lot of what he learned on the stage. "Not knowing the piece and still playing it, using your ears, feeling free to take a guess, and then understanding how the music develops." He learns most from other musicians and as such prefers to play with musicians who are better performers than he. "It is all a matter of listening, having good ears and a good (musical RS) memory." He can easily write down what he hears although he never writes down much. "Everything is in my head."

In the area of management Joris learns from his own mistakes and from people around him. "In the beginning I sat a lot behind my computer in my room. Now I know that I have to give attention to the students (from talking to playing football). You also see examples of how you would not want to do it."

Other aspects of the portfolio career

Once Joris settled in New York, in addition to performing, he began composing, arranging and even producing. In 1993 he produced *Pay As You Earn* with

saxophonist Don Braden. Braden was experienced and Joris learned from him. After that he produced another disk with him, and began to produce for others. Since 1993 Joris has produced some ten recordings.

He regards the position at the Prince Claus Conservatoire as enriching for a variety of reasons. In the first place he values the idea that he can give back to the students, although it is important for him to be able to balance his work at the PCC with his own playing. "I have to play; an uneven balance makes me very unhappy." Next to that he enjoys working in a team with very different personalities. As a jazz musician he feels a loner, even when playing with others, because the people he plays with are hardly ever the same. "Here in the management team of the PCC I have a steady team of pals. That is fun, and it is new for me." Thinking about the relationship between music and education is important for him.

Satisfaction about the career development

Joris describes himself as very ambitious. He feels most satisfied with the aspects of his musicianship that relate to tone development, swing, and choice of notes. "It annoys me when other musicians cannot do that." In short he is most satisfied with his artistic accomplishments, he also feels good about some of his compositions. He describes them as "things that you have gained as an artist, which give you the feeling 'this is me.'"

He is the least satisfied with the fact that sometimes he clams up and plays badly as a result. "My fellow musicians must notice that. I then get problems with being in tune, and everything feels heavy, I start to sweat." This can happen when he has not been performing regularly, due to his work at the PCC. He feels unable to control this. "When this happens to you, it is more or less a surprise. It has everything to do with how you feel about yourself, and that is linked with the people you are playing with. If the musicians surrounding you are good[10] you are taken away in a positive sense. Trust is important. Musicians who play better than I do never make me nervous, rather they are a positive influence. Sometimes I just suddenly feel a lack of confidence: it is all in my head. This has often happened, but I can control it well enough, otherwise I would never be where I am now."

On the question why he is now where he is Joris replies that this is a matter of sufficient self confidence. "I have a kind of talent which gives me a sense of responsibility. You hear a lot of bad music, I want to change that and add something good."

Values, knowledge and skills

Joris considers having contacts with other musicians as important for self-esteem and motivation. "Soul mates with whom one shares an artistic vision are of the utmost importance. In the Netherlands I have fewer of these than in New York."

Although Joris has taught himself a great deal he still feels his education to be

lacking in the areas of music history, listening sessions, and learning to play the piano. "At the conservatoire you learned nothing about other musicians. In New York I was introduced to 'Randy'. It turned out to be Randy Brecker, but I did not know who he was!"

While a great deal of class time was spent on didactics at the conservatoire, he felt it provided him with little that was relevant. Joris feels he is at a disadvantage having started professional jazz training at a relatively late age. When Joris teaches he thinks of his own teacher. "I think back on his lessons. You learned by observing him on the stage and in the studio. I also try to give a good example to my students by not smoking and living healthily."

Joris sees no circumstances that might have been an impediment to his career, though "if I had been black I would have had more success as a jazz musician than I do now as a white Dutchman." Joris feels success is linked to one's level of desire: "If you want something badly enough, you should be able to be able to succeed at it, provided it is a realistic aim."

Reactions to changes in professional practice

Joris does not have the feeling that changes of the last twenty years have had an influence on his career. He realises that many people find that a lot of things have changed. "To my mind, there are no fundamental changes. Clubs close, but elsewhere new clubs open. New young people arrive on the scene. But the interest in jazz music has never been big. That has not changed. This is a pity, because your whole life you feel you need to be a missionary. Once people hear jazz often they start liking it. So I have an important task. There is more computer written music nowadays, and more digital information is available. There is more interaction now in the jazz scene between the USA and Europe. CDs are harder to produce and sell. You must always find new ways to solve problems. That is okay for me. There is always a big interest in music."

Reflection and goals

Joris considers all his activities (performing, composing, arranging, producing, teaching, and managing) as being totally interconnected. "Teaching and playing concerts are in fact the same; in both cases you are making people aware of things and sharing those things in which you believe strongly. On stage you do not explain, but you create awareness by communicating."

He is of the opinion that playing together with someone allows you to know immediately whether or not you will be able to get along. He feels it is important to get along with other musicians, though "by nature I can be a chameleon; I get along easily with people and I can also easily adapt." He can cope with the bad moods of others, but not with a lack of respect. Nevertheless: "In music-making you can get over these things because you share something fundamental."

Joris' short term goals are to find a good balance between performing and his job at the conservatoire. Longer term goals include further raising the artistic level of the jazz department at the PCC. And: "as a musician, I want to play better, compose new pieces. There is so much to develop. I always have the feeling that I have just started!"

Interview held April 11, 2005 in Haren

1 Grammar school in the Netherlands consists of six grades (ca. 12 – 18 years).
2 At that moment the Conservatoire of Hilversum offered a high quality jazz programme. In later years this conservatoire merged with the Amsterdam Conservatoire.
3 DM: Teaching Musician, meaning a diploma as a performer with a qualification to teach; nowadays a Bachelor, including a teaching qualification.
4 UM: Performing Musician, in the sense of a performance showing the qualities to be a soloist, nowadays a master's degree.
5 A slow and intimate piece of music.
6 The most important national jazz podium (Amsterdam).
7 Work permit.
8 Introduction of a piece.
9 A bundle with various jazz melodies and chords.
10 Meant here as 'excellent players'.

Corrie van Binsbergen

Guitarist, composer and band leader Corrie van Binsbergen finished her classical guitar studies in 1983. She has been active in a very wide musical range and played with numerous different bands and groups, in pop, jazz and improvised music, music for theatre and dance productions, recording sessions, TV-shows and even the circus. In 1986 she started her own band 'Corrie en de Brokken', consisting of twelve top musicians from the Dutch jazz and pop world. Ten years later Corrie founded the 'Stichting Brokken', with which she realises a new, surprising and successful production every one or two years, where she brings together different musical styles and (cross) art forms for a far broader audience than jazz concerts can reach. In 1999 Corrie van Binsbergen received the VPRO/Boy Edgar prize (the most prestigious award in Dutch jazz- and improvised music) for her creativity, craftsmanship and versatility. This prize is considered an oeuvre-prize. She received numerous commissions, from the NPS Jazz marathon, the European Woman in Music Congress, the Mondriaan String Quartet, the Holland Festival, Scapino Ballet Rotterdam, Film Museum, the Netherlands Wind Ensemble, The Radio Symphony Orchestra, and the Asko Ensemble. Currently Corrie works successfully with the concept 'Writers in Concert', where writers and improvising musicians interact.

Those are the most marvellous moments, that is the extraordinary thing about writing. This strange combination of mathematics and intuition, something touching me deeply in my inner self. It is comparable to playing Bach in the past, this feeling of things coming together, only now and then, but those moments make me very happy.

Background and childhood, growing up with music

Corrie van Binsbergen grew up with two guitar-playing brothers, one five years and the other three years older. She was born in 1957 in the small city of Tiel in the centre of the Netherlands, where she spent her childhood and part of her youth. Corrie's father worked as a civil servant in an agricultural institution and her mother was at home, taking care of the family. Both parents are still alive. Although neither of the parents was a professional musician, Corrie feels that she inherited her artistic skills from her mother, who sang in a choir, and from her grandmother, who had literary skills and wrote poetry.

At an early age Corrie encountered music in an informal way. She learned a lot about music-making and specifically playing the guitar, because both her brothers played the guitar. They played in bands which very much interested Corrie. "My oldest brother played in a *bluesband*, which rehearsed in a farm. I used to go there with my friends to watch the band playing. It appealed to me enormously. One can say that music entered my life naturally. I have never given it a moment's thought.

All kinds of musical genres existed together and mixed and merged throughout my childhood."

Corrie's parents encouraged the music-making of their children. She feels that she had the advantage of being the third child. "My brothers paved the way; my oldest brother wanted to go to the conservatoire, but my parents didn't agree, so he studied English first and later went to the conservatoire. My younger brother also went to the conservatoire at some point, but he didn't finish his guitar studies; he became a music educator instead." Neither of the brothers became a performing musician, as Corrie did.

Corrie started to play the guitar when she was about seven years old and soon after that she had guitar lessons. Her teacher recognised her talent and suggested at some point to Corrie's parents that she should have a good classical guitar. "I played on a guitar with steel strings, a kind of egg slicer. The strings were placed quite high, which hurt my fingers. After one year of lessons my teacher talked to my parents, offering them his guitar for 60 guilders, as he was intending to buy another one." By then Corrie was eight years old.

Her teacher was Cor van Meeteren and Corrie has good memories of him. He taught her for a long time, even throughout her period at grammar school. Corrie had private lessons, and when later a music school was founded in Tiel, Van Meeteren was appointed there and Corrie became a pupil of the music school.

She does not remember much about music at primary school, although she has a photo from that time with children dancing and she herself playing the guitar.

In 1969 Corrie went to grammar school. In general school went well, although Corrie did not have much joy in going to school. She found it especially 'dull and boring'. Playing the guitar went on, until this period. "I had this famous dip of puberty when I was approximately 12 or 13 years old and I didn't want to play the guitar anymore. I stopped and felt I wanted to play the piano; meanwhile there was a piano in our house and I used to like messing about on it. But then I got official piano lessons, which I didn't like at all. Starting from the very beginning, doing exercises, playing boring studies, I didn't have any patience for that." In total Corrie stopped the guitar for one year and after her little excursion to the piano she took up the guitar again. "This time I was dead serious; I had now decided that I wanted to go to the conservatoire."

Corrie has positive memories of her childhood. "There were a lot of boys around and I found that highly interesting."

One vivid memory remains with her: "I must have been 14 years old when there was a Christmas concert organised by my school. It took place in St. Maarten's Church, which had glorious acoustics. I was allowed to go there one day before to

practise and try out the acoustics and that was a wonderful experience. I felt that was the *real thing*."

Corrie doesn't feel she practised so much, but nevertheless her development was rapid. She thinks it must have had a lot to do with the fact that she had played the guitar from early childhood.

Making up her mind about a career in music

She had to repeat the third form of grammar school. By then Corrie was 15 years old and she developed her own plans: "I knew that one could do an entrance examination at the conservatoire after three years of grammar school, so I set my mind on that. Meanwhile my oldest brother studied at the conservatoire and he advised my parents against my plan, telling them he thought that I was way too young. I have often wondered how things would have turned out if I had had my own way. I didn't like my brother's interference. I saw my future clearly, having a solo career as a classical guitarist. I had this incredible experience in the church, which had made me make up my mind. Nevertheless I think that it was a good decision to remain in grammar school, because in the end it wouldn't have been my pathway to become a classical solo guitarist."

Two clear moments are alive in Corrie's mind when asked about the role of music in her childhood and adolescence. The first is the memory of Bach's music. "When playing Bach my mind would open up. That is difficult to explain, having to do with a feeling deep down. But it was the role of music during my puberty, it touched something extremely fundamental."

The other experience was when Corrie was 16 or 17 years old: "I was alone at home watching a documentary film about Nicaragua on television. It was very striking and quite terrible and it touched me deeply. After that I took up my guitar and started improvising. I had not done it much by that time and I remember it as an extremely important point in my development."

Corrie obtained her grammar school diploma in 1976 and subsequently took an entrance examination at the Utrecht Conservatoire. Her parents supported her decision, especially her mother, who never had the opportunity to study and was happy that Corrie got hers. "I also think that I had an advantage in having two brothers who grew up before me; my parents gave me more space." Corrie's oldest brother occasionally had a hard time with her. He was at the conservatoire but had been playing the electric guitar in the first place, so he hadn't had much experience in classical guitar, which was a disadvantage for his study.[1] "He had to learn a lot, and when he came home I would play the pieces he had to practise easily. That must have been quite irritating for him."

Period at the conservatoire

Corrie was admitted to the preparatory class of the conservatoire, although she had her diploma from grammar school. "That was due to my technique. The jury found that I played beautifully, but at the same time they felt I was playing like a wild horse that needed to be tamed. I had to work at my technique despite how long I had been playing. By coincidence a few months ago I met my old teacher Cor van Meeteren again, and he told me that he had often wondered whether he had worked well enough with me on my technique. He felt he hadn't been strict enough with me, and said that he had always found that technique didn't matter so much, as long as one can play what one wants while sounding really well. Well that was for sure. He could have challenged me much more. I had to go back to basics, also in terms of the level of the music I played. That was deadly boring, especially for someone like me."

Corrie got lessons from Hans Verzijl, who also taught the lute at the conservatoire. During the first year in the preparatory class Corrie also started to read Philosophy at Utrecht University in order to fill her week in a useful way, as she had only lessons on Saturday.

In the end she spent two years in the preparatory class. In the second year she stopped her philosophy study and took on some small jobs, posing as a model and teaching a bit at home. "Actually I made quite a mess of it. I was really discovering life by then. I had to live on 'bread and water' at the conservatoire, which I didn't like, but I clutched to that at the same time because I knew the *rock 'n roll* life I was leading wasn't healthy. To be honest and without wanting to sound melodramatic, I clung to my study to prevent myself ending up in the gutter. The friends and vague acquaintances I had at that time… I knew intuitively that it was quite a mess, having bad drinking and smoking habits, I knew I had to get out of it."

In 1978 Corrie started in the first year of her classical guitar study at the Utrecht Conservatoire. Her teacher was Hans Breedenbeek, who had studied with the world famous guitarist and composer Leo Brouwer in Cuba. This appealed to Corrie. She remained for the full five years of her study with this teacher.

She experienced the time at the conservatoire in an ambivalent way. Some of the lessons were wonderful, like the lessons of Ton Hartsuiker, the well-known specialist in contemporary music, whilst others, like the lessons in guitar pedagogy, she found terrible. There were quite a few guitar students, "they were shy; we had those guitar evenings where all students had to play which felt like a kind of wrestling with music and those evenings were so boring. I didn't like it at all."

Corrie was eager for a bit of challenge, but met bureaucracy instead. "In my last year the response of my teacher became less and less. He was so easily satisfied, just like my previous teacher."

She always lived closely with the experience she had with improvising when she was 17 years old. At some point she asked her teacher whether she could improvise

during her final examination and she had to fight hard to gain permission to do that. "I was told that I had to play different genres from different stylistic periods. Why? For five years they had been able to hear that I could do that. I didn't like guitar music from the classical period at all. I liked *Renaissance*, Bach and from Villa Lobos on to contemporary music. But it couldn't be changed." Also, when she was not allowed to change her Bach piece into a piece of Bach she preferred, she got angry and refused to do an examination in front of an audience. "I was angry and I played my final examination behind closed doors, with the jury sitting at a large table."

During the period at the conservatoire Corrie started to write music. She also got befriended by the pianist Albert van Veenendaal, with whom she started to play a lot and they even lived together for seven years. Meanwhile Corrie played in bands, among which with Albert, she sometimes played the electric guitar and she started to play the bass guitar. At that time it was not allowed to combine these instruments.[2]

Corrie graduated in 1983 and received her teacher's and performance diploma.[3] After her examination she was offered the opportunity to continue her study for earning a soloist diploma[4] but she had had enough and besides: "I couldn't bear the idea of practising the guitar for four hours a day."

Looking back to the period at the conservatoire

Corrie feels that she was granted space at the conservatoire except for the final year, when things became so rigid for her final examination. She had good times at the conservatoire as well, with friends, and inspiring teachers. She listened a lot to music.

In her fourth year she had a wonderful opportunity to play in a theatre show of the cabaret artist Frans Halsema and directed by Bram Vermeulen.[5] "I was fortunate. I got a card in my letter box, inviting me to take an audition. I did the audition and was accepted immediately. It was quite an experience, from which I gained a lot of expertise. Looking back it must have been the most luxurious tour I ever had in my life. Everything was taken care of, like flowers in the dressing room, clean towels waiting for us, my guitars being tuned and brought on stage. I think we did more than 100 performances, which was of course quite hard while preparing for a final examination as well. But I didn't bother and I earned a lot of money."

Development of career and personal life

After graduation Corrie went on with what she had started during her study, playing gigs here and there. "I did many different things, actually just things people asked me for."

An important incentive for her career was playing in UIL, the *Utrecht Improvisation Laboratory*, initiated in 1984 by Albert van Veenendaal and his duo

partner saxophonist Dick de Graaff. "It was a project carried out by a group of musicians, and I kind of invited myself there. It was an important stimulus for me. It was the first time I performed in the Bimhuis.[6] We had nine concerts and two of the pieces we played were written by me. It inspired me. Just after it finished I suddenly heard a band playing, *Ray Anderson and the Slickaphonics*. I liked it very much and I wondered whether I should start my own band. Looking back I think these two things were the incentives for starting *Corrie en de Brokken* in 1985 and 1986.

Corrie remembers vividly when she made her decisions about her future career. "On my 27th birthday I realised all of a sudden that time was passing and that in three years' time I would be thirty years old. I wondered what I was actually doing, why there were never things I was doing to which I considered inviting my family or friends. I just did things that came in my way; I didn't choose the direction myself. I earned my money with music, but not with something I regarded as special, which was actively connected to *me*. I then decided that I wanted to change this in a very concrete way. My experiences in the UIL and with this fun band I heard triggered me off."

In 1985 Corrie started to create her own band. She called four musicians with whom she would like to play. "I had nothing to offer, except myself and my compositions. People just had to feel like trying." Initially things did not work out ideally in the rhythm section, but after a few different drum and bass combinations the group got its form as Corrie imagined it, when the double bass player Hein Offermans joined. The band *Corrie en de Brokken* was immediately successful. "Our first season was wonderful. We earned money, so I could pay the members of the band; in those days you got paid immediately after the concert. It was marvellous that I could pay my musicians by playing my own music. We played our first programme seventy times in the Netherlands. That does not exist anymore."

Meanwhile Corrie's relationship with Albert came to an end. They continued to work professionally. Corrie started a relationship with Hein and since then they have lived together in Amsterdam. In 1991 their daughter Jasja was born.

From Corrie en de Brokken to Corrie en de Grote Brokken

Ten years after the start of *Corrie en de Brokken* Corrie founded *Corrie en de Grote Brokken*.[7] The latter was a band, consisting of twelve top musicians from the Dutch jazz and pop world. At that point Corrie received a subsidy for her band. "I felt that we were beyond the stage of 'Let's try something fun, keep your agenda empty and we don't know whether there can be any payment.'" Corrie got a subsidy from a foundation of performing arts.[8] "It was a very ambitious plan, connecting pop musicians and jazz

musicians; it would need quite a lot of rehearsals as some people were unable to read notes. I wanted it to be an exciting and *cool* band, with a lot of freedom."

Continuing to be entrepreneurial she established the foundation *Stichting Brokken,* with as its aim 'initiating border crossing collaborations, stimulating cross-pollinating projects and working on chasing away narrow-mindedness'.[9] From this point Corrie started realising a number of astonishing musical projects and products, bringing different musical styles together. "I made three different programmes with the *Grote Brokken,* the last one is called 'The Country is Tired'[10], from 2005 which we will perform once more next July." The second programme was 'Kado uit de Hel!'[11], from 2001, which also made use of texts.

What started as a project managed to sustain itself. After the first programme both Corrie and her musicians felt that they needed to continue. A recording company got interested in releasing a CD, so then the second programme emerged, actually out of the number *Present from Hell* from the first programme. "One event triggers the other, it is a continuing story."

Since 2005 Corrie's foundation is supported by a yearly subsidy from the Dutch government, which gives some kind of peace of mind. It also enables Corrie to have some administrative support. "That is superb, I cannot imagine that for years and years I did it all on my own. It happens all at the cost of one's artistic energy. I made that clear when applying for the subsidy."

It is especially during the periods of hard work in rehearsing and giving concerts that a lot of things cross Corrie's path concerning publicity and practical matters. Often it tends to be too much. "The weird thing is that you have to organise new work in the period that you are quite busy with playing, in order not to find out that you encounter a huge gap as soon as the concerts are over."

Acknowledged by the Boy Edgar Prize

In 1999 Corrie got the *VPRO Boy Edgar Prize*, the most prestigious award in Dutch jazz and improvised music, meant as an oeuvre prize. She was very happy with it. "Especially because I was then in a phase of my career where I was doing what I really wanted to do and what fitted me. It was wonderful that just in that period I got acknowledged for that fact."

Corrie was not only pleased, she was also surprised: "I had always thought that this was a prize for virtuosic jazz musicians." She is quite critical about her work: "Things sometimes go easily and when people are enthusiastic I tend to wonder what the fuss is about. There are things I am satisfied with, but I also often feel that sometimes I could have made more of it."

Writers in Concert

With the programmes *Writers in Concert*, which Corrie started in 2003, a new highlight in her career emerged. In February four successful literary concerts took

place in the Bimhuis in Amsterdam with a group of eleven musicians, consisting of a group of improvising musicians in combination with a classical string trio. The writers who took part were Remco Campert, Toon Tellegen, Manon Uphoff and Kees van Kooten. This initiative turned out to be such a surprising and successful concept that a national tour followed in 2004. The concerts were released on CD. In May 2005 a new series of literary concerts took place in the Bimhuis. A diversity of writers and poets were invited: Ramsey Nasr, P.F. Thomése, Renate Dorrestein, Josse de Pauw, Rascha Peper, Erik Jan Harmens, Hagar Peeters and Jules Deelder. In 2006 more concerts took place and again a number of new CDs were released.

> Two things made me think of this concept. I had worked with texts in my programme 'Present from Hell'. What was even more concrete was a commission I got from the VPRO, to make music to a Japanese fairy tale.[12] It was a spoken fairy tale with music sounding at the same time. This writing, it made me totally happy. It went well and somehow it also went easily. I realised that I wanted to do much more, and more often with texts, it was so fantastic. So I pondered what I would like, what would be beautiful. I considered that I preferred listening to writers telling their own stories instead of actors saying texts. This dryness, I like it. So I made a wish-list of writers I would love to work with. I contacted Huub van Riel, artistic director of the Bimhuis, to ask what he felt about me working with musicians and writers as an experiment. I wanted to try it so much, to write myself and work with a number of *big shots* who could improvise so wonderfully, like Tobias, Joost and Wilbert.[13] Combining it all seemed much fun. Fortunately the Bimhuis responded positively and we had great evenings.
>
> Remco Campert was the first writer I approached. I had read his work and admired him already when I was twelve years old. At some point I wrote him a letter explaining what I had in mind. He phoned me and we agreed to meet in a café. I was quite nervous, and wondered what would happen if things didn't work out in our conversation, but things went easily and well from the start. All in all we had a wonderful time, drinking too much of course. Remco suggested that we should use poems. But I had two small novels in mind, one of them being *Als in een droom*.[14] He liked the idea. While working on it I found out that the text would be too long. So I contacted him, asking how we would go about it. And he said, 'you just skip what you feel is redundant.' I couldn't believe my ears! But I tried and did it and when we met again he agreed on every suggestion I made. The writers I work with are all very different and that makes it so exciting. Of course I discuss things with them but in the end nobody interferes with what I am doing, except for Kees van Kooten, he sometimes starts improvising as well, with language.

Maybe it is best to explain how I work artistically on this concept by giving the example of Toon Tellegen, *De Trein naar Pavlovsk en Oostvoorne.* These are stories which he tells as a child about his grandfather. A few of his stories immediately gave me ideas. When I read this first quote 'my grandfather told me that the Russian language knows at least eleven different words for *guilt*, as the Eskimos know thirty different words for *snow*', I immediately saw that the word 'guilt' comes up a lot, every time having another meaning, and sometimes having the same meaning. So I made something heavy of it, as if feeling the weight of guilt on your shoulders. I wrote it in an 11/8 metre, which I felt was fitting. I composed a melody on the bassoon as a basic line. Each time when the word 'guilt' comes along, a chord must sound. Every musician has its own line, jumping up and down. The musicians don't have a score in front of them; instead they have the literary text, with *cues* written in it. So actually I tell the bassoon player, 'Here the melody begins, you are free to improvise over the rhythmic basis that is laid by the double bass, the percussion, piano and guitar.' I have an image of instruments and of colours of course.

The whole programme of the evening needs to be an arch, embracing music and content. I look at every detail. The recordings that are made are live recordings, with all mistakes occurring. Only that is natural. Except for the soundcheck we don't rehearse with the writers, which makes it quite tense for both the musicians and the audience. It happens once and it needs to be spontaneous. The writer tells his or her story and I give the cues. I told Remco, 'First we play the cover of the book, which is abstract music and takes about two minutes. When the cello starts playing a melody after that, you can start reading aloud. If you don't feel confident, look at me. Take pauses, if you like, we'll fill it in.' The music can be illustrating, sort of programmatic even, like in Tellegen's *De Wandeling* (the walk, RS). It can be multi-layered.

In the *Writers in Concert* series I am a composer in the literal sense of the word. I also use material that has already been written and gear it to the text. Sometimes I nearly automatically think of music that seems to be written for it. That can be my own material but also from others. In a certain passage in Campert's text I immediately thought of *Till there was You*. And in one of Josse's (de Pauw, RS) stories about an irresistible but unapproachable strawberry he saw somewhere in the countryside, I made a little *minuet*. I also used a minuet as a negative little piece of music for a very crude text of Tellegen of two old women.

In the piece *Sisyfus* I gave a structure to the basis of the chords which becomes a kind of turning around in circles, coming back automatically where you started. That is a kind of philosophical given, and I used it as well with a longer story of Tellegen about an existentialistic quest of an ant.

Tellegen has a kind of nasal voice, I like that. And Campert recites quite monotonously, which I actually find beautiful. It gives me the opportunity to use a lot of musical devices.

The aspect of time in music is fascinating. When composing jazz music I have a kind of track in mind which I determine beforehand, but actually I do not write more than a framework for the improvising musicians, within which they have their liberty. Improvising musicians can influence time while they are playing. In the *Writers in Concert* series the framework is of course the literary work. Within this frame the improvising musicians have this peculiar sensitivity of time; it fascinates me enormously.

Another important given in *Writers in Concert* is the fact that the form of course already exists, especially in a poem. It holds a danger as well, because I don't want anything to be predictable. I am striving to build different layers, leading to a concentration during the concert, carrying along both the musicians and the audience on an evening in which something really happens.

I now intend to start something new with the actor Josse de Pauw, whom I invited for the second series. We will make a piece together in the long term, in cooperation with the Asko Ensemble.[15] We will have our first brainstorm in a few weeks, I look forward to that tremendously.

A life in music

Music plays a big role in Corrie's social life. "Nearly all my friends and acquaintances are musicians. My social life takes place before and after concerts." She is often on tour with only male colleagues, but it is not an issue for her. "People sometimes ask me about it, but I grew up with two brothers, that is telling enough."

There is not much free time. "I hardly see other friends; I try to see my parents regularly." Corrie doesn't mind being very busy. "I have less and less moments of stress. I am very busy, but the more experience I get, the less it bothers me being so busy."

Still there is place in Corrie's life for her passion, which is reading. "Reading has always been an anchor, especially in my *rock 'n roll* period. One can flee into another world: 'I won't open the door right now, because I am reading.' During the period of the literary concerts I would of course read a lot, it was wonderful to realise that I was reading *and* working hard through reading at the same time."

Composing

Corrie receives quite some commissions, for example from the NPS Jazz Marathon and the Asko Ensemble and she also wrote for the Radio Symphony Orchestra. She considers herself a 'Sunday child'.[16] "I have been writing (composing, RS) for a long time, but that was always for my own bands and projects. Obtaining commissions is

a quite recent development. After I received the Boy Edgar Prize I was reflecting about my future and I realised that I would like to write more. On the moment I decided I should look for opportunities the phone rang, and since then things went fast. I wrote for the Riciotti ensemble, the Netherlands Wind Ensemble, the VPRO broadcast, it was amazing."

> While composing I work intuitively but at the same time there is a plan. So it is both. The last piece I composed for example was written for the *Mondriaan Quartet* and the *Loeki Startdust Quartet*. Two quartets, one a string quartet and the other a recorder quartet. I became quite practical, considering that they would probably play this programme only a few times together, so that it would make sense when I would make miniatures, which can also be separately performed. They should be able to collide or merge, but would need clear ideas at the basis. So that is an assignment I gave myself. I feel I am good at miniatures, writing long lines remains difficult for me.
>
> I know quite soon how I want to begin and end. From that point I work quite intuitively, using a number of sounds or chords or a series[17] which I consider to be my point of departure. Once I have this plan I sit at the piano and work it out. I don't work at the computer, someone else writes out my scores on the computer.
>
> I find it important, also when having a commission, to know for whom I am writing. The first commissions made me wonder what was expected of me. It is easier to write for oneself, because then you set up something you have already in your mind. I look for people who fit my idea. In the compositions I did with the writers, I knew that I wanted to have an ensemble consisting of an improvising trio, a string trio, and a kind of 'bridge' trio. I also knew I wanted to have Alan (Purves, RS), Tobias (Delius, RS) and Wilbert (de Joode, RS) as improvisers, giving me the ideas and sounds. You know what to expect in the most positive sense of the word.
>
> Writing for orchestra is difficult, I feel. When I wrote for the Radio Symphony Orchestra I felt challenged. I worked hard on the imagination of sound colour, on the inner hearing of chords being performed by different groups, I had never done that before. But in the end it was wonderful to notice that it came out as I had imagined it. It is like you can work with a whole palette of colours. I felt very pleased when the conductor asked me who had made the instrumentation! But I feel that this piece was mainly a kind of 'studies in sound colours'. I want to gain ownership of new techniques.
>
> There is this piece I wrote for two guitars, for Anton Goudsmit[18] and myself, called *Dr. Schweitzer's Last Mission*. I wanted to write a piece with a long melody line. I then saw a kind of pattern in the chord progression and I felt that I should pursue that. At some point you have this *groove* in your

head, which unfolds, you put the bass line below and suddenly you discover this pattern. So actually in this case the idea emerged from intuition, and the structure started to unfold itself.

At the moment I am really writing, there are all kinds of strands in my head, logical connections, which you suddenly see at a later stage. You are in a real *flow* at such a moment. Those are the most marvellous moments, that is the extraordinary thing about writing. This strange combination of mathematics and intuition, something touching me deeply in my inner self. It is comparable to playing Bach in the past, this feeling of things coming together, only now and then, but those moments make me very happy. The feeling of development is wonderful. Remco Campert writes that a poem is at its best when it is on its way to be completed. You read it in a flush, you know you are making something really good, it is very fulfilling in that moment.

I remember having an enormous amount of drafts when I wrote for orchestra, it was a big complicated network going on in my head. I don't think I could reconstruct the development of my thoughts anymore, but at that time it was all very logical. Sometimes I also got stuck in a certain area and then I would leave it for the time being and would work on another part of the piece. On orchestration for example, which is a lot of work, a few bars can take a whole morning. Sometimes I cannot bring myself to that, because then I have all these things in my head that still need to be jotted down, terrible! I then wish that I was more of a genius and would be able to write it down more easily.

I learned how to work effectively in composing. I prefer to work in the morning. When I have worked for three hours it is done. The creative process then stops for a while. I can then take on other things, in administration, or even working out things in the composition. Composing is an amazing process.

Learning as a musician – important influences

Corrie mentions listening as an important factor for learning. She is an inquisitive and intuitive musician. "People sometimes tell me that my style resembles Frank Zappa. I think that this is because I have listened to him a lot. Unconsciously it influences you." She mentions Stravinsky as a very important influence for her.

Corrie learns from other musicians mainly in terms of attitude. "I can look with amazement at someone like Alan Purves, who has really extraordinary *antennae*, who can open his ears at any time and perform or improvise something absolutely to the point at that particular moment. I keep wondering how that works. It is a special gift, I don't know whether I learn from it, but I love it and I admire it. All in all I think that I am a quite autonomous musician. I don't feel directed very much by other musicians or composers."

Changes in the cultural environment

Corrie experiences that nowadays there is less money for culture in the Netherlands and that at the same time the offer in total is increasing. "It is getting more difficult. Theatres became enthusiastic about the *Writers in Concert*, but playing with a new quartet for example is very difficult. You need to think of a theme or put a certain flag on that. I find that such nonsense. But it is definitely a trend in the Netherlands."

Current aims and longer term ambitions

Corrie feels that the programmes of the *Grote Brokken* are ready and finished now. She has a lot of other plans. First she wants to pursue the plans she has for the work with the actor and theatre maker Josse de Pauw, although she has not a focused idea yet what it will be. She likes pioneering and she knows exactly when the moment comes for change: "That is when I already know how a new piece would be sounding. I then wonder why I should do that."

She earns an income that is sufficient, but income is never a personal issue for her in terms of having it determine her choices: "I don't mind at all to jump into deep waters. Of course I mind when I take other people along. Some of my colleagues are often concerned about their future, but I am not, I will see what happens. I experienced that often when I hope that things will happen, they actually come true."

Corrie is sometimes considering writing an opera. "That is quite a big word, but I love working with texts. We shall see what happens. I am occasionally thinking of writing for film as well."

It is important for Corrie to have it her way; she is not the person to deliver on demand. "I just worked in a theatre production called *Lucy in the Sky* and when I was asked to make the music for it I warned that I am a person who wants to interfere. In general that is accepted, although of course you must be able to let go occasionally as well."

Corrie is very satisfied with the fact that she is capable of carrying out projects successfully, and can offer the people she works with a proper fee. "When I am on tour with my musicians, I want it to be well organised and I like to take care of them."

"Things are moving continuously. I am now well on my way with composing, I enjoy it tremendously. Fortunately I am a disciplined worker. I still like *having a ball* enormously, but I do it more and more in a planned way. I am a hard worker, actually I can never stop."

Interview held June 2, 2006 in Amsterdam

1 By that time no jazz departments existed yet in conservatoires. Hence the fact that he couldn't study the electric guitar at the conservatoire.
2 Ironically Corrie was asked much later to teach the electric guitar to classical guitarists at the Utrecht Conservatoire, as meanwhile it had become a compulsory subject.
3 Called 'Teaching Musician', comparable to the current Bachelor's diploma.
4 Comparable to a Master's diploma.
5 Both artists have meanwhile passed away.
6 Most famous stage for jazz and improvised music in the Netherlands, housed in Amsterdam.
7 'Grote' is the Dutch word for 'big'.
8 In Dutch: Fonds voor de Podiumkunsten.
9 Source: www.corrievanbinsbergen.com.
10 The first was called 'Brokstukken'(1998).
11 'A Present from Hell'.
12 A Dutch broadcasting company. The commission was for a children's programme, *Villa Achterwerk*.
13 Tobias Delius, tenor saxophonist and clarinettist; Joost Buis, trombonist and Wilbert de Joode, double bass player.
14 'As if in a dream'.
15 A well-known Dutch ensemble for contemporary music.
16 Well-known Dutch phrase for someone having a lot of fortune.
17 A number of notes in a certain order.
18 A Dutch jazz guitarist much admired by Corrie, also portrayed in this collection of biographies.

Marc-Olivier Dupin

Marc-Olivier Dupin (1954) grew up in Aix en Provence and started to play the violin at the age of nine, at a later age switching to viola. He studied harmony, counterpoint, fugue, analysis, orchestration, viola, chamber music and conducting at the Conservatoire de Paris. After graduation he held various positions in regional conservatoires, until he was appointed director of the Conservatoire de Paris in 1993. From 2000 till 2002 he worked as a consultant for music education for Jack Lang, minister of culture, in the framework of the 'Mission de l'Education Artistique et de l'Action Culturelle'. Since 2002 Marc-Olivier Dupin is general director of the Orchestre National d'Ile de France. Marc-Olivier Dupin is a very successful composer. He has written over 120 works, mainly music for theatre and film as well as operas.

All decisions I have taken were always linked to music and to people. And that goes for every important or small detail.

Some backgrounds

Born in 1954 in Paris, multi-faceted musician Marc-Olivier Dupin stems from a long generation of musicians from his father's side, being from the eleventh generation. His mother was Jewish, coming from the Ukraine and spending her early childhood in Lithuania. She went to school in Germany and to university in England where she met her first husband. She spoke ten languages and had four different passports in her life. Marc-Olivier's mother met his (French) father in England in 1953. Marc-Olivier has a sister, Katya, born from his mother's first marriage. She did not grow up with him although they saw (and see) each other regularly. Marc-Olivier's mother died in 1996, his father is still alive.

Childhood and music

Until 1960 Marc-Olivier lived with his parents in Le Mans and after that they went to Aix en Provence, where he continued living until he went to Paris when he was eighteen years old. Marc-Olivier's father worked as a violin teacher in the conservatoires of Le Mans and Aix en Provence and his mother worked as a university teacher in languages. His father brought him in contact with music from an early age: "I was lucky, my parents had no money for baby sitters, so my father would often take me to rehearsals when he was playing chamber music or sometimes in orchestras. So I was very young when I was already in the theatre where they were playing. It fascinated me. One of my first memories is a Bach harpsichord concerto, which they were rehearsing; I remember that I sat playing with my toys under the harpsichord. The music and the performance impressed me."

In Aix en Provence Marc-Olivier went to primary and secondary school. There was no music at all in school. Marc-Olivier describes his education at both primary and secondary school in short as 'terrible'.

He started to learn the violin at the age of nine: "I studied for four years with my father at the conservatoire[1] but when I was thirteen I was in a big teenagers' crisis and then I did not want to study with him anymore. Also I did not feel too comfortable with only doing the violin, so I started learning solfège[2] and harmony. I got lessons in that." He feels that the choice for the violin was a very natural one. Piano was his second instrument: "I was not lucky with the teachers, so I was more of a self-taught bad pianist."

Music was not discussed much at home: "my parents were interested in many other things and I think they did not want to talk about the technical aspects of their jobs at home; they were not interested in that. My mother did not speak about her teaching either." Marc-Olivier's mother was according to him more interested in literature and painting than in music. He describes his home as "a lively house with many people popping in and out."

Adolescence: chamber music, changing to the viola and composition

Marc-Olivier went a lot to concerts and rehearsals and at the age of thirteen he also started playing chamber music at the conservatoire and at home: "I did different things in chamber music and there were wonderful moments with my father. I think his idea was first for me to enjoy it, secondly to educate me in this field. We played string quartets, with my playing the second violin and with a good cellist and viola player, so I had that privilege already when I was twelve or thirteen years old. It was a great experience. When you discover Mozart quartets in this way, it is much better than through a CD or whatever. I was lucky."

While playing chamber music Marc-Olivier gradually realised that he wanted to deepen his sound world. "I felt not getting under the g[3] was a problem." No wonder that at a certain moment he changed from violin to viola, although that was much later. "My first meeting with the viola was when I was sixteen. There was a new synagogue being opened in Aix en Province. My father was asked to play there and they could not find a violist. Darius Milhaud was invited and some of his works would be played. So my father ordered a viola method from Paris and I started learning the viola. I had already started learning harmony, so I knew the C clef. I played probably very badly. It was my first introduction, but I liked it."

As a teenager Marc-Olivier started to compose. "I did not do it much. It was more like copying some great masters. Then I did not do it again for many years."

Although from early childhood music seemed an obvious choice, it was not a clear-cut decision for Marc Oliver to make his profession in music: he nearly chose to study mathematics, feeling attracted to it because he had a very good mathematics

teacher, "but it did not last." The choice for the Conservatoire de Paris was made, but: "for many years I did not know what I exactly wanted to do in music. My father wanted me to be a conductor. It was very clear that I would be a musician, but I did not know what, even during my years at the conservatoire. So in the end I did many different things. I was a student for ten years; I went into twelve to fourteen different classes."[4]

Marc-Olivier took his *baccalauréat*[5] in 1972. But before that he had started lessons in harmony and solfège with Nicole Cochereau, the wife of Pierre Cochereau, who was at that time organist of the Notre Dame in Paris and a very good friend of Marc-Olivier's father. Marc-Olivier describes Pierre Cochereau as 'a genius', having been made organist of the Saint-Roch at the age of fourteen and of Notre-Dame a few years later. "They were living in Nice. As a teenager I would go two days a week to Nice, and I would stay there, and they would host me for one night and feed me both with food and music. They were absolutely wonderful people, both great musicians whom I owe a lot. Nicole Cochereau taught me harmony so well that I easily got into the Paris Conservatoire. They have both been very important to me."

Period at the Conservatoire de Paris

At the age of eighteen, Marc-Olivier went to Paris and from then on would study at the Conservatoire for ten years. "I started with solfège, then in 1973 I took on harmony and counterpoint. I got my first prize[6] in one year, and then continued with fugue, analysis and orchestration. I started viola and chamber music later in my period at the conservatoire. The viola I started in 1978. As a student at the Paris Conservatoire I played the viola occasionally, when someone was needed or missing, for a gig or whatever. But later during my studies I missed playing the instrument more and more. Then one day I saw that I was still young enough to get in on the viola. So I went to a very good teacher, Serge Collot, who was actually an old friend of my father, from the time that they were both students in the conservatoire. I played for him a Bach piece, I think awfully, but he was very kind and said: 'okay, let us try it'. He was a marvellous teacher and a marvellous musician, and told me a lot of things. Collot had studied conducting with Désormière, and composition with Honneger. He knew the composer Hindemith, had practised the viola sonatas with Hindemith. He told me so many things, going much further than just telling about the instrument. Studying the viola was quite hard for me because initially I had started different things and when you start to practise an instrument seriously at a later age it is much more difficult than when you are younger. I had of course problems with velocity. So it was very hard, but also very wonderful because I had this teacher Serge Collot."

At the conservatoire Marc-Olivier also started taking a conducting course, but he soon

found that the school actually had bad conducting teachers. Although: "We had twice for a couple of weeks lessons from Franco Ferrara, who was an outstanding teacher. So I consider that I studied conducting for four weeks in my life."

Although Marc-Olivier is at present a well-known and much respected composer in France, especially for music for films and theatre, he did not study composition during his ten years' stay at the conservatoire. "I tried to get into Messiaen's class[7] and I was refused. But it did not matter because I had studied harmony, counterpoint, fugue. I also studied orchestration with Marius Constant who was a very good musician. I was also involved in many interesting projects, like for example performing *Eclat/Multiples* with Pierre Boulez[8], who both wrote and conducted it and many other things. So I had close contact with composition and contemporary music. But at that time taught composition was either very academic or sectarian ('post Schoenberg'), and I did not feel comfortable in either of these two areas."

"There were wonderful fellow students. I met great people in that period, and many of my close friends are from those days. There were not many activities in the conservatoire; it was quite narrow. So we did lots of other things, outside of the school, to get oxygen. I played sometimes in a tango group or I would play in musicals. That is actually how I started composing: someone was needed to make music for a short film, unpaid, but we would do it. We had a lot of fun, working hard, but with great joy. We really needed it because the school was very formal. I tried to do things in the conservatoire, but that was difficult. I was one of the student representatives in the board, but that led to nothing. There were no real possibilities. When I was director at the same conservatoire I often referred back to those years, wanting to make a difference to what happened earlier on. One reason why my door was always open was that in *my* time you could never see the director nor anybody of the administration. So during the eight years I spent in La Villette[9], I tried to have my door open as much as possible. So it was not really fun in my time at the conservatoire, but there were many good teachers and that made up for a lot. The group-synergy between the students was also very good. Take for instance the harmony class: we were with eight students, they were wonderful people, all being eager to see each other's work."

During his study Marc-Olivier worked as a teacher as well, to earn a living, grants being low. "I did a lot of teaching, like private lessons in solfège and harmony and then I got a job in a small conservatoire in the 6th arrondissement. For seven years I taught counterpoint there, while I was a student. It was six hours a week, and I learned a lot from it."

Role of the teachers

Marc-Olivier describes the period at the conservatoire as 'a very mixed period'. "Some teachers were outstanding. For harmony, counterpoint, viola, analysis and

orchestration I had great teachers. But in some other fields it was really shit and boring, like in fugue and chamber music, it was not challenging at all or teachers were lazy. But I think that as long as you have three or four outstanding teachers, it is enough. It is okay then, you can survive the others."

Marc-Olivier feels that once he got older he was more capable of picking up what he needed. "When you are younger you are more in a kind of parental link. My harmony teacher was like a second mother, she was a wonderful lady, extravert and generous, and my viola teacher was like a second father. But then when I grew older I had for example lessons with Marius Constant, the composer and orchestration teacher, who was not a very good teacher, but I nevertheless managed to pick up what I needed. I only had to ask him thousands of questions during the classes, poor guy. There were wonderful teachers among my teachers. Some of them were very influential. They would encourage me to go to other teachers as well. I was appreciative of that. Collot made something wonderful happen which actually had a lot of influence on my life. He had been one of the first violists performing in the *Domaine Musical*[10] which Boulez created. The two were very close. When Boulez was going to perform his *Eclat/Multiples* he asked Collot to bring a few students to play. And I was one of them. So we had a few concerts, like in the *Monnaie* in Brussels, in the *Scala* of Milano, and we did a recording. It was my first meeting with Boulez and it was wonderful."

Marc-Olivier would stay in the Conservatoire de Paris till 1982. "I was lucky, having such a broad education in music." Many people were influential for him: "When you meet the right persons of course they have influence. I must say I had quite a few, because I was lucky, but also probably I had a good intuition for people."

Pierre Boulez

"I have always had a good contact with Boulez. He is an outstanding musician and I think he is in many ways a very honest and modest person. He is exceptionally clever and he has a vision. When I think about conducting, I 'see him' in a concert or a rehearsal, I have been to so many of his concerts. What I find really great in him is that he never takes anything for granted. I remember that one day I asked him what he was working on and he said, 'Well I am going to conduct a Bruckner symphony for the first time in my life' and he was saying this as I would say, 'I am going to try roller skates', with expectations, interest and not knowing what it would be like. He is a wonderful person, a very imaginative person. I know his music well, he probably influences me as a composer, but I think not so much. As a composer I sometimes work tonally, and sometimes non-tonally. For me it is not an issue somehow. So he is influential for me, but more with respect to his attitude to music. He can talk about any music wonderfully. He also has a great sense of humour. Actually he helped me a lot to become director of the Paris Conservatoire, partly

because he believed in youth. I was 38 years old, but he did not feel that as an obstacle."

Learning

"Learning is probably some kind of energy, which is not far from obsession. If you are not obsessed by something, you might not learn. I think it is very linked to motivation, from there you find the ways. I will give a specific example: Collot was a marvellous teacher but he did not speak very much. Actually he spoke hardly, and sometimes what he was saying was perhaps not even specific. But when you had a non-solved problem he would give you one of the most obscure works of a not very well-known violist or violinist. He would know exactly what to give to you and then he would say: 'okay, you will play this next week to me.' You would come home and try to play the thing and you could not move so to speak. It was so much the thing you did not know how to do. When I was working on such things I wanted to find a solution, but I had nobody to tell me. So I was like 'a hen who has found a knife' as we say in France. Then you tried thinking, to analyse, to feel different things and try and find a solution. So the process is very much like this. It varies on the teachers. I think that the best teachers are *not too* explicit on theory. For instance I had wonderful harmony and counterpoint teachers who would never refer to a treatise, or whatever. They taught me some rules, but not through books. In harmony and counterpoint we would always do the first exercise together, but never with books. We had to remember the rules of course, but this did not obsess them. It was more learning by doing. In order to realize my compositions I have used many of the techniques of composition, like harmony, counterpoint, fugue, analysis and orchestration, which I had learned. So I had only somehow to put those skills together. I think what really helped me was working with theatre and for the cinema. Because when you work for the film you try to find some kind of meaning. This is the way that sort of puts everything together for me. When you have to express yourself in a certain way, if you have the tools, you just pick them from the box."

Marc-Olivier does not feel he missed particular things in his education. "I think I had enough. It took me some time to make the link between different aspects of knowledge. For example I did not always link the music analysis process to some kind of performance. I did these things only *after* my period at the conservatoire. When you are out of school you are a different person, more responsible, and then you make the different links. The useful links are then appearing. You cannot expect everything from the school. When I was a director the teachers and I had many discussions about what to put in the curriculum. Some of the teachers wanted to have everything in it. That is not possible. It is crazy. You must give the basic and main things as well as you can."

"What I disliked as a student was the fact that there were not enough concerts, and that there were no crazy projects. And the food was not good…, *Sauerkraut* every Wednesday, we were not allowed to go by the lift, there were not enough practise rooms, these kinds of things. I am never bitter about my education. I am grateful to the Conservatoire de Paris as a former student, really."

Starting a career: Nantes, Villeurbanne, Créteil, Aubervilliers

When Marc-Olivier left the conservatoire in 1982, he had not exactly in mind what he wanted to do. He was appointed chief assistant of the Orchestre des Pays de Loire in Angers and Nantes in 1983. He did not leave Paris, but was commuting. "It was not a good period in my life, I was a little lost somehow. I did not know what I wanted. The period between 1982 and 85 was a bit strange; I started composing, but nothing was very fixed somehow. Then completely by chance in 1985 I got my first job as a director in the Ecole Nationale de Musique in Villeurbanne, a suburb of Lyon. I was again commuting. It was an interesting school. I combined the work there with composing."

Marc-Olivier feels it was a natural choice for him to manage a school: "I think I had ideas, the will to organise things and create things." Composing, meanwhile having started after graduation, became at the same time more and more important for him.

"The school in Villeurbanne was interesting, for example it had a rock department and there was jazz. There was attention to songs and traditional music, lots of interesting things. It was a complete mess, but a very interesting one. I learned a lot, like how a school worked, how to deal with people. I was also learning to develop projects from the start. It was especially interesting that I could do things I had not had as a student. It was a lot of work; I also discovered for example how you have to work in politics."

In 1987 he went to the Ecole Nationale de Musique de Créteil, a Paris suburb, which he liked, not having to commute anymore. "Créteil had very good teachers, but no good buildings and a lot of other problems. In the end I had a big fight with the mayor, so I left in 1990. I then started leading the Conservatoire National de Région of Aubervilliers, which was very nice. It was a good school; I had a good time and a good relationship with the mayor. They were really concerned with the meaning of music education." Meanwhile, in 1989 Marc-Olivier had got married.

Director of the Conservatoire de Paris

In 1993 Marc-Olivier was appointed director of the Conservatoire Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris. "Xavier Darrasse[11] died. I felt ready somehow. The first thing I did was go and see Michel (Strauss, the cellist, at that time already teaching at the conservatoire, RS) and ask his opinion. He gave a good analysis of the situation in the conservatoire. Later I discovered that his perception of the

situation was very true. I spoke to a few friends who were teachers there. There was also Thierry La Roy, head of music at the Ministry of Culture, whom I knew, so I spoke openly with him about my interest in the position. He was very good and advised me to campaign. So that is what I did, approaching only the people I liked, including former teachers. Boulez was very supportive as well. So that is how it came about."

Marc-Olivier would stay for nearly eight years. He experienced this period as very positive. "It was a great period, a marvellous experience and an interesting time. There were many positive things and a few negative things. I think in the conservatoire there are many artistic strengths and a lot of things that in a way can be developed further. But we have achieved quite a lot of changes for the better. One thing which I was not aware of when I entered the Conservatoire in 1993, was the terrible state of the administration. It was a shambles. On paper it looked fine, and people had not been telling me this. It remained a problem during the whole span of those eight years. Also I think it would have been better to have had a little more dialogue with the state. It was okay, I had good relationships, but politicians are not interested in education because education is a long term investment and politics is always only short term oriented. So I was disappointed by this lack of dialogue and imagination. I enjoyed the relationship with the students and the teachers. We made some valuable changes. There are two changes I regard as really important, being the organisation into departments and secondly the creation of a real diploma. Before that time it comprised sets of diplomas with no connections. I also developed a lot of projects for students. A performer needs to perform, a composer needs to be played and so on. I created many relationships with other institutions, like organisations of concerts, of theatres, with the Cité de la Musique etc. It was useful for the students. I also enjoyed my period as secretary general of the AEC[12] in those years, we developed very useful things."

Marc-Olivier created many new challenging projects for students, made important appointments of teaching staff, but he regards his biggest achievement that he created 'an open door'. There are also things which he would have liked to achieve but did not: "There are many things I would have liked to have had in a better way. The building is not cared for enough. I did not manage to make changes in the semi-professional orchestra of the conservatoire, which I would have wanted to make. I had some ideas but I did not have enough time to do it. I would have liked to implement a choir conducting course. I would have liked to improve much more the administrative situation. When the administration is not working well the unions become more important and you see many people playing power games."

New steps: Ministry of Culture and the Orchestre National d'Ile de France

In 2000, at the age of 45, Marc-Olivier decided to leave the Conservatoire. There

were several reasons for this: "I was thinking that either I would be staying there for the rest of my administrative career or I would do something else. My mother had died not long before and my marriage was a shambles. So it was a moment in my life when I felt I had to do something else. It was funny because when I told this to the Ministry of Culture, they said: 'What, you want to leave? But this is not a kind of job you leave!' I said: 'Why not?' They could not understand, especially as I had no new job at that moment. But I am sure it was the right decision. For two marvellous years (2000 – 2002, RS) I was then the advisor to the minister of Culture, Jack Lang. He was great. He trusted me completely and helped me to achieve all the goals I thought important. We managed to develop things which I consider to be very important. Like developing singing education in primary schools again. We worked on very specific practical things in all regions, like organising plans to develop the tuition of choir masters, to develop working on repertoire, many things. It was an interesting time; I never had a boss like this, who was so supportive. He was absolutely a sparring partner, and very accessible, I could talk to him easily."

In 2002 Marc-Olivier became general director of the Orchestre National d'Ile de France. The position had been offered to him earlier, when he had just started working for Jack Lang. "So I said 'no' to the orchestra. They then started a procedure to find someone. But after one and a half year they came back, because they were not pleased with their choice. This was six months before the elections, and I was quite interested in the job with the orchestra. So I talked to Jack Lang and said, 'Listen I have this offer, but I want to be very clear; I am not going to take it if you don't want me to.' He was very generous, and said, 'If you want it, just take it. But leave the latest you can.' I offered to remain some kind of non-formal expert and work on a different basis, but the political situation completely changed when the socialist party lost the election. So there was no question anymore of working with the government. Actually it was important for me to work in the reality of music again."

The position in the orchestra is, according to Marc-Olivier, in many ways comparable to the position he held in the Conservatoire, being responsible for the whole institution, both artistic and administrative. The orchestra gives concerts in the region of Ile de France, which in itself is the size of Belgium; it also often tours outside this region.

Marc-Olivier develops many educational projects to be realized by the orchestra. He sees a strong link between producing and educating: "When I was in the education world I was doing a lot of producing. Now while I am in the producing world I develop a lot of educational work, because I think there is this strong link." He gives an example: "I commissioned four composers to do work on *Les Fables* of Jean Fontaine, by writing for children's choirs of primary schools and orchestra. So they worked in different schools and we performed it in two different towns, 200

children in each. Children who never had any encounter with music were singing with the orchestra. We had another project last June. We worked with 1300 (!) teenagers for six months and performed a Brazilian programme in the Zenith.[13] It was incredible." Motivating the orchestral musicians to do this kind of work took some time, but "now the musicians perceive it very well." The Orchestre National d'Ile de France consists of 95 musicians.

Meanwhile Marc-Olivier met Manue, his current wife. They are now four years together. "I met her in the Conservatoire, she worked for a while in the jazz department. I then asked her to work with me at the ministry and later to the orchestra. It took us three jobs to get married." Manue is engaged in the public relations of the orchestra. In 2003 their first daughter Lila was born and in 2005 their second daughter Elia.

Composing

Composing is ongoing. Marc-Olivier has produced an impressive amount of works, especially music for theatre, cinema, orchestrations and opera, amongst which several children's operas. Writing for theatre is something Marc-Olivier loves to do. "The first steps are the most important and they are quite long. Of course I read the play itself many times and try to understand it the best I can. I work with the stage director and read a lot about the play (about classical theatre for example). I try to make connections with all the things I might know or which I might discover. The writing of the music itself is a very short process compared to this preparation. Also I am like many people, lazy and starting to write in the last minute. So actually it is like an iceberg; it is a huge lot of preparation before you produce something."

During the process Marc-Olivier often goes to rehearsals. The actors can be very influential for him: "It can be a face, an expression, a way of saying the text, all of it can lead to certain music, and choices of colours and instrumentation." Marc-Olivier has no preferences for certain genres: "It is completely linked to the people I am working with, to the performers, and also to the text. When the plays are beautiful and rich, working on them is a wonderful and exciting experience."

Writing for a particular musician can lead to funny results: "like a long time ago I was writing for a film, including a small ensemble with two cellos. Michel (Strauss, RS) was married to Martine at that time, so I wrote for them. At some point he phoned me, saying: 'I have an American friend passing who is staying with us in Paris. He is broke. Could you write a third cello part for him?' I said that it was fine. So preferences in writing are actually a mixture of many things. It is not always fixed for whom I write. I never write a piece without a commission. On the other hand, from time to time I try to organise a production or the commission of a work."

Marc-Olivier has composed a lot of music for children, for example operas like *Le Joueur de Flûte de Hamelin* (1981), *La reine des Gourdes* (1989), and *La Pension du Diable*

(1997), the last two in cooperation with the textwriter Ivan Grinberg, a friend who is, according to Marc-Olivier, a very good writer for children. After that stage he composes the music. He loves children singing.

Currently Marc-Olivier is writing film music. In a few weeks time he has to finish a score for a silent film, based on the novel of Monte Cristo. "My orchestra will record it. I have been working for very long on it. Composing itself is not a slow process, but also here the preparation took time." Writing continuously is easy for him; "it is only hard to get back to it when you have to break it off for a longer time."

There is one important goal as a composer of film music he regrets not being able to reach: "I would have very much liked to work with great fiction film directors for quality reasons. But it is nearly impossible to get in. I regret sometimes that it is such a small world that can also be mafia-like…"

Now and the future

Marc-Olivier sees connections between the span of his life and his career: "People are very different. Some people go on with their job no matter how their personal life develops. Some have the marathon taste for a single job in their whole life. But my career is less defined; I have been working in education and now I work in producing. I am a composer, so it is less monolithic than for some other people."

Music plays a central role in his life: "My first act as a director ever was in 1985. I just set foot in a conservatoire and I had to decide on a poster. They put some Czerny studies on the poster. I immediately changed that for the *Liebeslieder* of Brahms. All decisions I have taken were always linked to music and to people. And that goes for every important or small detail."

Marc-Olivier does not listen much to music. "I like silence very much. Music is central indeed, but not round the clock. I miss reading and I miss having time just to do nothing. Sometimes that can be an obstacle."

He finds it difficult to define his current and longer-term aims, "because I feel in a big contradiction. I compose more and more, so sometimes I think about giving up institutions to focus on composition only. On the other hand I would also want part of my life to be filled with social activities. So this is a contradiction that is not solved. But it is not very important, because I don't really have a sort of aim. Although there are some projects I would like to achieve, and which are complex. Shortly I want to finish a book on music education that I started just after the Jack Lang period. There is one thing I miss; I would have liked to work in a foreign English speaking country. I could live in England or another near country, why not."

Marc-Olivier is very pleased about the fact that nowadays he is conducting more and more; he conducts his own work, be it with his own orchestra or another one.

"I have a lot of opportunities these days. I do very satisfactory projects. My relation to conducting has always been a little painful for me, because I studied in a situation with bad teachers and also not the right understanding. Although I have good qualities to conduct, I have no perfect pitch[14], nor an ear like Boulez. So I have not always had good experiences with it. But now it comes up. My compositions are successful, so people ask me to conduct them. It is nice that something that was not easy earlier in life is happening now."

Looking back he finds that he has of course encountered problems during his career: "I have had bad experiences, like everybody else, like some situations not being prepared well enough. I got involved with jobs where I had sometimes many problems, not earning enough money, or running after time. But I have learned a lot in each job I had."

He describes himself as a musician that is a generalist. "Louis Jouvet, the French comedian was always saying: 'vous devez être dans le sentiment'; 'you must be the meaning and feeling of it'. That is what I am trying to do, and it fits perfectly in the writing for film and theatre."

Changes in the music profession

Marc-Olivier recognises changes in the music profession, according to him one of the biggest being the number of people involved in the profession, all wanting to be in the top. "There are many offerings and possibilities, but not in the proportions of students being in the conservatoires. That also goes for the Paris Conservatoire. I would have liked to admit less students. It is very difficult when you have a jury… I think it is the problem of many schools. Especially the middle range is difficult; institutions often take too many students in the middle range. On the other hand there are many more possibilities nowadays than 15 years ago. I am not negative about it."

Nowadays Marc-Olivier is busy finishing both his music for the Monte Cristo film as well as his book about music education. The target groups for this book are manifold: students, parents, but also politicians. "It is more about the process and the policy than about tools for music education. I hope to finish it by Easter."

Interview held January 22, 2006 in Paris

1 In the French system a conservatoire can be both a school where children and/or adult amateur musicians can learn to play an instrument as well as institutions for higher education in music.
2 Ear training.
3 The g in the small octave being the lowest note of the violin.

4 At that time the study was set up in such a way that a student could take different courses.
5 Final examination of secondary school.
6 Premier Prix is given as a diploma of the Paris Conservatoire.
7 Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992), one of the most important composers of the 20th century; for many years professor of composition at the Paris Conservatoire.
8 Born 1925. Influential French composer and conductor. *Eclat* was written in 1965. Boulez expanded it into *Eclat/Multiples* for tuned percussion ensemble and orchestra in 1970.
9 La Villette is a conglomeration of concert halls, theatres and a park. The famous *Cité de la Musique* is housed there as well as the Conservatoire de Paris.
10 A concert series, set up by Boulez in 1954, in order to provide a podium for new music.
11 Organist; at that time director of the Conservatoire de Paris.
12 Association Européenne des Conservatoires; Marc-Olivier Dupin was secretary general from 1996 till he left the Paris Conservatoire in 2000.
13 A podium in La Villette, for big presentations.
14 Recognising the musical pitch without any (harmonic) context.

Jacob Slagter

French horn player Jacob Slagter was born in the province of Frisia in the Netherlands. At the age of fourteen he was already a soloist at the 'Frysk Orkest' (Frisian Orchestra). He studied at the Academy of Music Pedagogy in Leeuwarden and the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague and graduated with honors. After a number of tutti engagements he was appointed principal French horn player of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in 1985. As a soloist he worked with Bernard Haitink, Riccardo Chailly, Nikolaus Harnoncourt and Wolfgang Sawallish. Jacob is a versatile musician, who played chamber music with the Fodor Quintet, is principal study teacher at the Amsterdam Conservatoire, jury member of the jury of several international competitions and also involved in various conducting activities. All of this has resulted in a number of awards, amongst which the prestigious Nederlandse Muziekprijs (Dutch Music Award) which he received in 1988. Conducting is taking a more prominent place in his work these days. He is chief conductor of the Netherlands Fanfare Orchestra and was also holding the reins in the series of the Holland Sinfonia and the Gelders Orchestra. Jacob still has a special place in his heart for the HaFaBra-sector (harmony, fanfare and brass bands). He is proud of amateur musical practice and shows this by regularly performing with orchestras, either as a soloist or as a conductor.

When Haitink makes this ever so small gesture with his little finger I know exactly what he means. And I react in such a way that he will know: 'that is exactly what I had in mind.'

"When I was seven years old we moved to Kollum and from then on I went to church with my parents.[1] At that time the congregational singing was accompanied by the wind band, as there was no organ yet; because the organ was being built. I sat next to my father, who played the *E flat bass*[2] and I heard the overture of the band. I was in the midst of the band, but not playing; I saw the conductor, being the leading person of the orchestra, and I heard the congregation starting to sing. It was totally overwhelming. So at a young age I was in the situation where I am in now. When I am sitting in the orchestra and I have a choir behind me, and I see the conductor and the audience, I realise that actually nothing has changed much. The heart of what I grew up with hasn't changed. It impressed me deeply at that moment. The playing and the conducting fascinated me. How could one man get such a big machine moving?"

A childhood full of musical exploration

Jacob Slagter was born September 4, 1958 in the little town of Dokkum, and he grew up in Westergeest, a village nearby. Jacob stems from "a casual working class Frisian family". His father worked on a drilling platform at the Department of

Waterways. His mother was a housewife. Jacob's parents are both alive and healthy; his father is 80 and his mother 72. He has a brother, Harke, who is four years older, a sister, Janneke, who is six years younger and a brother, Harm Pieter, who is ten years younger than him. "So there were the five of us. We were a normal happy family, including two parents who were together and remained together."

Jacob grew up with music in the same way as many children in Frisian villages: by playing with family members in wind bands. "My father played the bass trombone, and my brother played euphonium. When my brother was in school I would secretly try to play on his euphonium." When the family moved to Kollum and Jacob got to know the music in church he was hooked.

"When I was eight years old my father all of a sudden put a bugle in my hands and took me to the wind band. Actually I could hardly read music. The librarian of the band was handing out a march, he saw me sitting there and gave me a second bugle part. There I was! Then my neighbour Willem whispered to me: 'You come and sit with me, I'll teach you those notes'. That's how it went. My siblings played in the same band."

The wind band had started as a 'fanfare' but changed into a brass band[3] during the seventies. "In the period of my childhood you either did music or sports, which was mainly playing korfball." Jacob enjoyed playing in the wind band. The atmosphere was agreeable and friendly. But the big impression he had had in the church when he was seven didn't leave him. "I remember that at some point the construction of the organ was finished and it would be inaugurated. I had followed all of it closely and I had these images about how it would sound. The wind band was to play on this occasion as well. Then it turned out that I couldn't come to this event, because my parents meant it would be too late for me, bedtime. I remember that I found it terrible."

The organist was Rein Ferwerda and Jacob recalls his improvisations. "I used to climb up to the organ and watch his fingers and his registrations; it made a big impression, what a musician!" Other musical impressions came from recordings and the radio. "My neighbour bought an installation, and I was dumbfounded by the sound of it. From that moment on I got interested in recordings and started to buy them, first only registrations of wind bands."

"At that time I made my own drum kit in the back of the garden. I had a potato box, which was the little drum, I had pan lids hanging on ropes, I climbed into a tree to cut branches, which served as my sticks, and then I could sit for hours behind my drum kit. I was even so crazy to make something like a little stave with a knob, resembling a stick for playing the base drum. I made it with material from my meccano box. I had once heard the sound of that and I had a certain image of

it. My parents didn't say anything about my drum kit. They just let me get on with it."

"When I was nine years old my brother got an offer to play in a brass ensemble that had been established at the brand new music school De Waldsâng in Buitenpost. He was invited by Tjeerd Brouwer, who was a teacher there, and Jetze IJlstra, a friend who was in my brother's class and who played the euphonium fabulously. When they came to our house I was struck that they didn't even consider me! So I sulked heavily and I decided to join my brother at the first rehearsal. I went with him and upon arrival I boldly said: 'Well, Brouwer, here I am, coming to play as well!' 'You bring your bugle next week son,' Brouwer said, 'and then I'll listen to you'. Well, I was *in* it immediately. And so I became a member of a real youth orchestra full of enthusiastic players, that was fantastic music-making."

Meanwhile Jacob was in primary school. He was not a very good pupil, nor very motivated. "I came from a working class family, and of course a career in music was not considered at all. I took it that I would go to technical school and after that do the same as my father, working at sea attracted me, friends of mine would do that as well."

But things went differently. In the last grade of primary school Jacob took part in a soloists' competition and to his surprise got very high marks. When his teacher at the music school, Tjeerd Brouwer asked him what he would be doing for a profession, Jacob heard himself say: "When I am grown up I want to be a conductor." His teacher told him to be practical and learn to play a 'proper instrument' first. He then advised Jacob to play the trumpet.

Brouwer took him to the music school in Leeuwarden and let Jacob play to the solo trumpet player of the Frysk Orchestra, who saw his big talent and advised him to play the French horn, as there were many good trumpet players at that time, but a lack of good French horn players. By that time Jacob had never seen or heard a French horn. Brouwer then made an appointment for Jacob with the principal French horn player of the Frysk orchestra, Oldrich Milek, who had a few years earlier arrived in the Netherlands from Czechoslovakia, now the Czech Republic.

"I came to Milek for this test. I played on my bugle for him, and then he unpacked his French horn. I remember thinking *'what is this?'* It was such an impressive instrument. Milek needed at least a quarter of an hour to explain me how to hold the instrument, which was very different as it is played with the left hand. He let me play a scale, then another one, and at some point I played four octaves. It went easily and didn't even fascinate me much. Maybe it helped that I had played the bugle, which is a high instrument as well. It was not hard to adapt physically."

Jacob took the advice of his teacher Tjeerd Brouwer to learn to play an instrument. But he didn't let go of his aspirations for conducting. "Sometimes when I am conducting I think back to this time. Conducting fascinated me and I am certain that my very first impressions of the wind band in the church were at the core of that. But I took Brouwer's advice seriously and decided to try and become a good musician first."

Leaving primary school while deciding for a profession in music

Jacob now had to shift his focus. He knew that he would have to go to secondary school if he wanted to enter the conservatoire, and that the technical school wouldn't be sufficient. He went to secondary school in Kollum, being the only one of his class who went there; worked hard and things went well at school. He got a lot of support from the school: "When there were special concerts where Milek wanted me to play the director would give me permission, as long as I always did my best."

Jacob's parents were supportive, because they loved music, but according to Jacob they would never express this aloud: "In our family we would not speak about those things. They never pushed me. They would help me if I needed help. But push, stimulate or promote me, no. They were behind my choice, solely because it was my decision, and I couldn't imagine that they wouldn't agree with it. Not discussing it was a Frisian tradition of: 'better be quiet'. The shipping industry, cows or religion could be discussed for a whole day, but you had to mind your words if you were to speak about music in your enthusiasm. My parents were deeply religious. We were not indoctrinated, but my youngest sister sang, she sang all those religious songs, and that was my parents' world much more than my world of classical music. So at a quite young age I went my own way in that."

Jacob's teacher

Oldrich Milek became very important for Jacob. "It is not a coincidence that he was my teacher for thirteen years. He had a kind of passion in his teaching which inspired me. Of course over the thirteen years there were enough ups and downs as well. But at the right moments there was a click. When I was young he would play things for me, I loved that. At a later age I found out that he was actually a better pedagogue than performer. But that did not interest me so much, because when he sang during the lessons it was so beautiful, with the right phrasing and vibrato. He was extremely influential for me, I think also that he understood the problems one could encounter so well, because he had also experienced them. He taught me so well that I can now also explain things well to my students. He was very disciplined, coming from the culture of an eastern European country. Every Wednesday I had to be at his house at 1.30 p.m. and then he would work with me

till 5 p.m. He would never skip teaching. If he had the flu he would teach me in his pyjamas. He came to talk to my parents. I got private lessons and had theory lessons at the music school. He organised funds that could support me because it was impossible for my parents to pay for my lessons. He invested so much in me. Many people said that I should go to Amsterdam to study, but why? I had the best teacher and from the age of fourteen I played a solo concerto every year with the Frysk Orchestra! At some point I even played in the orchestra and got to know the repertoire. I could not have imagined any better education. I would walk around in the corridor of the music school and he would see me and say: 'Do you have anything to do? No? Come here then, I'll find a pianist and we'll work'. I worked very hard and he made me. I remember when I was still quite young I once had a lesson where he found out that I had not practised a transposition of a certain study. He walked into the canteen and made sure the students could hear the dressing-down he gave me, asking me if I realised that I cost my parents a lot of money. So next time I would know better. He would then invite the students from the canteen into the classroom, ask me to play and praise me to heaven. Only now I understand how good my education was with him. I am a teacher myself now as well. But if I am honest I also have to say that if I worked nowadays in the same way as he did, I am afraid I would not keep my job. My son did *kick boxing*. He used to play matches, coming into the ring with the care takers and the mental coach. I went to just one single match and I couldn't bear the way they hit each other. I asked him what the fun was about. He said: 'Dad, my coach has invested so much in me; I want to win so much, if it is only for him.' I recognised myself there."

Entering the conservatoire

Once in secondary school[4] there was no doubt left whatsoever about choosing his profession. Jacob was impressed with orchestras and together with his father he started going to the concerts of the Frysk Orchestra.

"I am just crazy about notes, as soon as I see notes I want to do something with them. I was crazy about Bruckner when I was in secondary school and I dragged friends to my room to listen to that. They *had* to listen to that… Of course after that they would never come back." It was not a lonely life: "I led some kind of double life, I was an ordinary country boy *and* I was crazy about music. I had a good relationship with my friends at school, we went to the pub, I was not someone who practised for hours at home. But whenever I came into contact with people, I *did* want to sell them Bruckner!"

In 1975 Jacob did his final examination of the MAVO. He combined his last year at school with the preparatory class of the Leeuwarden Conservatoire.[5] Upon his entrance examination in the same year he was told that he played a programme which he might also have performed for a final examination.

Period at the conservatoire
Jacob did his five year study in four years and graduated in Leeuwarden in 1979. He continued his studies at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague, where Milek meanwhile had also been appointed. Jacob earned his solo diploma in 1981.[6]

When Jacob entered the conservatoire at the age of 17, he met Fokje, his future wife. "She came from Buitenpost and from a totally different world, a world of normal people and hard workers. Her father had a flower and vegetable shop." Jacob and Fokje married in 1981, after his graduation at the Hague Conservatoire.

Jacob found his studies at the conservatoire most enjoyable. He has especially good memories of the period in Leeuwarden. "At both conservatoires I met special people. In Leeuwarden I remember this ear training teacher, Bouke Zijlstra, an enormous Bach lover, an emotional musician; you don't forget such a person. The students were special, they were all so different, I had a great time with them. We laughed *so* much! I have the most wonderful memories of them. They all got good jobs in the end. The Hague was very different. In the beginning I did not feel at home there at all, it felt like landing in a music factory. But it turned out that also in The Hague there were special people, like for example Jan van Vlijmen[7], the director; he was a good person. He was very direct, and in the end I loved those kinds of people. Van Vlijmen was respectful to me and to my family and got along well with Milek. I also got to know Frans Vester[8] there. I started to notice that great musicians were often the simplest human beings. Vester would teach with a cigarette and a glass of whiskey, meanwhile showing a superior artistic vision. We did a lot of Mozart, I learned so much from him. For me they were all great people. But different from the Frisians, less open."

During his period of studies in Leeuwarden, Jacob took up conducting as well. When he was in the second year of his studies, Jacob sought contact with his old teacher, Tjeerd Brouwer, to ask him whether he would teach him to conduct. "Brouwer was a kind of *godfather* at that time. He took me in his car to Lutjegast, to the local building contractor and told him: 'here is the new conductor of your fanfare orchestra'. So all of a sudden I had my own orchestra! Brouwer taught ten amateur conductors, all of whom had their own orchestras. We had our lessons on Tuesday evenings. Every week a different orchestra would show up, and when it was your turn you would conduct your own orchestra in front of the teacher and the other students. After the rehearsal a bottle of *jenever* was put on the table and we had our evaluations till midnight. You can imagine how afterwards we rolled out of the music school, where this all took place…"

Moving to the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra
During his studies at the Royal Conservatoire Jacob got a half time job as fourth

French horn player[9] in the Frysk Orchestra. He never moved to The Hague during his master's study, but remained living at home, in Kollum.

In 1980 there was a vacancy in the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and Van Vlijmen advised Jacob to apply for an audition. "I was dumbfounded, I had a job at a music school, I played chamber music, I had this orchestral job in Leeuwarden, why should I apply?" But Van Vlijmen warned Jacob that the Frysk Orchestra would probably cease to exist, which a few years later turned out to be true.

"The moment that Van Vlijmen said this to me was extremely important because I decided to apply. I did not feel I would have a chance. I came from the Czech school, I played with vibrato, I had never been raised in the school of sound of this orchestra. I was still even a student! But of course I wanted to audition because I had an enormous admiration for the orchestra and the hall.[10] I prepared my Mozart concerto with the pianist of the orchestra. I remember her saying: 'It is beautiful'. The audition was in the chamber music hall of the Concertgebouw and at that time it was not yet behind the curtain.[11] So I came on stage and saw all those famous musicians whom I admired so much sitting there: Bernard Haitink[12], Brian Pollard, George Pieterson, all those guys of the Netherlands Winds Ensemble whom I knew from my recordings. I was very impressed and I said to them: 'I am sorry, but I want to take this in first, because it might be the only time I come here!'" The audition went extremely well and Jacob was appointed. "My parents knew nothing about my audition, only Fokje knew."

"I don't know whether the impact of it sank in at that time. I had never had the illusion to develop myself in such a way that I would obtain a job in *that* orchestra. I enjoyed all the things I did at that moment. As I said earlier, I am happy as long as I am engaged in notes. Of course I find it fantastic what happens in our orchestra. But one gets used to it. One gets used to a certain level, but one never gets used to the pleasure music-making gives. My main motivation is the music and not where I am in my profession. The essence is that I want to do something with notes and want to share that with other people. Actually quite simple."

Jacob and Fokje went to live in Amsterdam. Three children were born, first a daughter, Mirjam, in 1985, and then two sons, Sybrand in 1987 and Reinier in 1991. Fokje has always taken care of the family.

Jacob liked playing in the orchestra, and he felt immediately accepted. "I liked the fact that I *belonged.* I did not have to prove myself. That changed later, of course." With this remark Jacob refers to what happened four years later in 1985, when he became principal French horn player. He did not intend to audition for the vacancy, but colleagues from the orchestra persuaded him to play. This time the audition was

hard. "I was of course much less uninhibited. People from the orchestra knew me, they had their expectations. I prepared myself extremely well, but I played less well during the audition compared to four years ago. But apparently the jury found what they were looking for, because they took me." Jacob feels that while preparing this heavy audition for the first time in his career he felt a lack of skills, having not been prepared enough in practising orchestral studies during his period at the conservatoire. He would take this on himself.

This very month (May 2006) Jacob celebrates his 25th year jubilee as a member of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. "I am still ever so happy with my job. I am glad that I can perform and that I have the ability to do that well."

Learning in the orchestra, in chamber music and in teaching

"I think that I have learned an enormous amount in the orchestra. You learn to develop antennae that receive everything and transmit this to you so that you can respond. All these antennae in our orchestra are directed towards each other. The better this works, the better the orchestra is. The Concertgebouw Orchestra is an ensemble of musicians that plays together so well that in many cases the conductor might just run off while we continue to play. We have a tremendous feeling of musical empathy. But of course it is a big machine and in the hall of the Concertgebouw the acoustics are beautiful, but difficult to play. Everyone recognises each other's colour and sound, everyone *listens* to each other's sound. When you listen to each other in a 100% concentrated way you don't have problems of intonation or articulation. Listening to each other's sound is the secret of everything. You catch someone's sound and the sound catches you. The personal view of a conductor is only part of the huge machine which is so well tuned that each conductor can change things easily."

Jacob plays a lot of chamber music, mostly in the *Fodor Woodwind Quintet*, which ceased to exist last year. He played approximately twenty years in it. "I am not so much at the foreground, especially when there are extravert musical leaders, like in the quintet. But when I am with my students I try to put my fingerprints on things, I do that mainly from my intuition. Sometimes I hear an ensemble and I think: 'Yes, they play well together'. But when you listen better you hear what needs to happen. You become open and then lots of things happen out of intuition, how you perceive the notes, how they flow, where it goes to. How they catch each other, who takes the initiative, who is the catcher, who passes it on. You are at work for hours before you notice. As a teacher you must be artistically convincing, I think."

Artistic influences: Brouwer, Milek, Haitink.

"A number of people were influential for me at crucial moments. The first one was Tjeerd Brouwer, who heard me play and felt that something special was going on

there. I won't forget his reaction. Milek was of course a big influence: I played something and I saw that man change; I sensed that he understood what I felt like inside. The same happened with Haitink. I knew it by the way I saw him reacting when I played my very first note during the audition. That never went away. When Haitink makes an ever so small gesture with his little finger I know exactly what he means. And I react in such a way that he will know: 'that is exactly what I had in mind'. No words need to be spoken."

There were many other artistic influences, both in the Frysk Orchestra and from the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. Jacob mentions principal bassoon player Brian Pollard as someone who had a big influence on his development as a musician.

Other conductors

Nikolaus Harnoncourt has been important as well. "He was influential to all of us. He came in a period when the orchestra still had a culture stemming from a heavy *greasy* romantic outlook. He brought music back to its essence and originality and he underpinned that as well. He made all of us think about our playing. He pulls the blanket off music: what did the composer think? In what world was he living? Harnoncourt is a master in that. I played Mozart's horn concertos with him and I went to him to talk it through, and I discovered that he knew much more about the French horn than I did. He knew everything about the performance practice of those days. I learned from him and absorbed the knowledge. His big merit was going back to the basics. I regard him as an enormous innovator because he made us *think*. Currently we are working on Shostakovich' opera *Lady Macbeth from Mtsensk* with Janssons.[13] He explains a lot to us about the opera and how it works. When you know how Shostakovich thought this over, you go to the heart of the music, what it is all about. That is far beyond playing your instrument. I have felt this during my whole life; my instrument has never been that important, but at the core is the question of 'what strikes me in the music and how can I relate to that?'"

The Dutch Music Prize

Jacob received the Dutch Music Prize[14] in 1988. While preparing to obtain this prize he took lessons with Dale Clevenger, principal French horn player of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He chose Clevenger because he wanted, amongst other things, to work on orchestral studies. Clevenger taught him from practice, which appealed to Jacob. After that he took lessons for a while in Brno in the Czech Republic, with Franticek Scholz, who had been the teacher of Milek, and also with Milek himself. Jacob got the prize in 1988 in the big hall of the Concertgebouw, while performing Mozart's fourth horn concerto with his own orchestra, conducted by Nikolaus Harnoncourt.

Conducting…

Jacob had not forgotten his childhood vow to conduct. In the world of amateur music there were not many possibilities to conduct in Amsterdam, but when the family at some point moved to Breukelen it happened that the conductor of the local brass band left after 50 years. Jacob's neighbour played in the brass band and asked Jacob to take over for a while, which he did for two years with much pleasure.

Halfway the nineties Jacob became conductor of the Dutch Fanfare Orchestra, which is an orchestra that was established from the heart of the Concertgebouw Orchestra, "with all the boys coming originally from that world. The manager who started it knew me from Frisia. I liked it and through that I got conducting engagements with the North Netherlands Orchestra and Holland Sinfonia."

Jacob likes conducting and feels no need for high ambitions: "I am the same person in passion and psychology as a conductor whether I am conducting the brass band in Breukelen or a professional orchestra. For me they are all people, and if you want to share your enthusiasm you have to do it in a way that people like. In professional orchestras musicians take me seriously because they know that I am in the profession as well. I am not making a big career as a conductor; that is not important at all."

… and teaching

Jacob has taught at the Amsterdam Conservatoire since 1985 for one day a week. He likes teaching, although he likes the musical side of it better than technical matters. "I don't want to check whether my students practise or not." Jacob tries to give his students as much time as possible, not having forgotten what his teacher gave him. He finds the motivation and entrepreneurship of his students important. "I cannot give them the experience of playing solo with a symphony orchestra like I had, but I can encourage them to try and organise a concert with an amateur orchestra. They have to become independent and with that attitude I of course want to support them. I see them organising exciting and nice final examinations, which is good for their development. I love my students, I try to involve them and I want to learn from them. There are really good moments and there is more cooperation between teachers than in the past. You see a lot less profiling of teachers at the cost of their students, less macho behaviour. I want to help my students to develop into the musicians that they really are. I tell them not to focus only on orchestras, to have many strings to their bow. The prospects for the music profession are not that good, I think. There are less orchestras and less jobs. You don't earn a lot of money. You really have to wish for the profession wholeheartedly, I think. Only those really disciplined and talented ones will get there. You cannot choose music with a noncommittal attitude. That is why I am so glad that none of my children have chosen music. They have chosen a proper profession."

Stage fright

"Of course I am nervous when I play. Who isn't? It is actually impossible always to be in top shape. On the one hand you are used to the demands, on the other you have the desire to achieve something and the fear of failure. That is the tightrope we walk. You want to offer something, but wish you could offer it at the moment which is convenient for you. And that is not possible in our profession. You are in a suit of armour in that way. It must happen at *that* particular moment, with *that* particular conductor and for *that* particular audience. That is hard, for everyone. Fortunately having nerves is not so much a taboo anymore. I have known times when it was absolutely impossible to bring it up. Especially when musicians came to an age when there could be problems with remaining in top shape. I am certain that it is more bearable for people when they can talk about it. In my case I know that a part of my performance gets lost because of my nerves. One is tense. It is possible that things improve once you get going, there are also evenings that are just shit.

At the beginning of this season I was out of the orchestra for two months because I got stuck. Of course I am older, and our orchestra is now in a phase where quite a few people have left who were there and on the top of their skills when I joined 25 years ago: people with whom I played a lot, with whom I had good relationships and with whom I went on tour. They gradually disappear and incredibly good musicians arrive in their place. Also my direct colleague left because she was no longer at the level of her earlier days. I saw several cases of people who had to step back because they played less well at a certain moment. For several years already I thought: 'what will this mean for me at some point?' So I looked in the mirror and said to myself: 'where are *you* in this process?' It is so strange in our profession, you get appointed to the top place number one in the Netherlands in your profession, and that is it. People think you can't fail, that you are superman, that everything is possible. Whereas of course the reality is that I am just a human being doing some things well and other things less well and meanwhile getting older. I saw a lot of that kind of things happening around me, but nobody ever in my life talked to me about it or coached me or asked me how I felt when I had to go on stage again.

Things went well for 25 years, but at the beginning of this season it went wrong. I was in Salzburg and had to play a solo, and for three seconds I had a severe black out. No sound whatsoever came from my instrument. Over and done with. I thought 'this is it'. I felt the moment arriving, but the moment it actually happened I confronted myself, so to speak. Those few seconds made me decide that I would stop playing, but not before I had done everything I could to find out what had happened and whether I could cope

with it. I had played very well for the last few years, but also I had often left the artist foyer with a feeling like, 'thank God, I have survived it again'. In other words, I was at some point so negatively directed towards myself that I was kind of *waiting* for disaster, and then what happens to your body? It stops! Fortunately people came my way to help me shift my thoughts in a positive way and teach me that what I am doing is good enough. I have a therapist who is a kind of mental coach for me. He asks me how real those issues are I am worrying about. Of course things have their origins. I realise that.

When I stepped out I had the feeling that I couldn't do anything anymore. After a few days I felt like getting my horn out. I took it, played it and I could do everything again. So then things became realistic again. I understood that I *could* do it, but that I had been under a lot of pressure and that for years I had been building up these negative thoughts and fear of failure, without ever having been helped or coached or having confronted myself in reality.

When this happened I contacted the orchestra immediately and asked for help. I was completely open with them and phoned twice a week. I also asked them to put me on the track of colleagues who suffer from the same problems. The management reacted very well. I now talk with both colleagues and a professional therapist. I am still in the process of recovery. It takes its time. But talking helps. It should have happened years before.

In sports this is totally normal. Why not in music at the top level? My son the kick boxer had a mental coach. He used to be scared before every match, but he had constant mental coaching. But in our profession it is a big taboo. I discuss it openly with my colleagues, on purpose. I now notice that colleagues are relieved when I bring it up. They are amazed as well: for years I was regarded as the rock of the orchestra, having one of the most difficult positions, but always being there, always playing beautifully and reliably, and I was never ill. So they wondered how on earth this was possible. Well, now we see that I am not the only one.

You never hear anything about this in the conservatoire. They will talk about posture and muscles, about all the physical stuff. But the fact that one can feel half sick because one has to go on stage in the evening is never an issue. I talk openly with my students about that kind of fear, it is extremely important. This pressure of winning the first time, being nowhere the second time, the pressure of expectations… I recognise it so well. It is part of my career and it happens. It shapes you. I don't feel particularly unconfident right now. I can handle it, but I still need the coaching. I have to learn to see things in perspective but it is quite a job to put that into my daily practice. It is not just thinking it over, but it is actually bringing it into practice that is difficult. You must not be afraid to *feel* how you really feel."

The role of music and future ambitions

The role of music is encompassing Jacob's whole life. "I have one big hobby, which is listening to music. Daily I will sit down to listen; to several kinds of music, not just to classical music. For the rest I have no hobbies; I do some sport because I know I have to."

Jacob has no special ambitions for the future, except to continue what he is doing and from time to time do some new exciting things that cross his path. He feels very satisfied with the opportunities he has had until now to make music. "I feel privileged that I am able to share with other people what is close to my heart, and that I am allowed to do it the way I do, including my shortcomings." He feels lucky and tries to live by the day. "There is no use being obsessed by the future and think ahead so much. I just want to be and remain a musician and as such mean something to other people."

"In music you can be in your simplest unpretentiousness the happiest human being. Someone else understanding you and trying to make that obvious in a way which appeals to you. These are the simple basic things which it is all about. It is something you have, you cannot learn that."

Interview held May 17, 2006 in Breukelen

1 Jacob's family was member of the Dutch reformed church.
2 Bass trombone tuned in E flat.
3 Fanfare consists of brass instruments and saxophones; a brass band only of brass instruments.
4 In Dutch called MAVO.
5 At that time it was called the Music Pedagogic Academy (MPA).
6 Nowadays a master's degree.
7 Jan van Vlijmen, well know Dutch composer, died 2004.
8 Frans Vester, flautist and leader of the famous Danzi Woodwind Quintet, died 1987 and spent the last years of his life on the performance practice of Mozart's works for winds.
9 In a symphony orchestra the high parts are played by respectively the first and third horns (first horn is the solo part), the low parts by respectively the second and fourth horn.
10 The Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, with its famous acoustics.
11 Mostly musicians who audition for an orchestra play behind a curtain on the stage so that the jury cannot establish exactly who is playing at that moment.
12 Bernard Haitink was at that moment the chief conductor of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra.
13 Maris Janssons, chief conductor since 2005.
14 The Dutch music prize is a very prestigious prize, where highly talented musicians can apply for after having obtained their master's degree. The candidate is granted a scholarship for studies and has to do several severe auditions.

Mist Thorkelsdóttir

The Icelandic composer Mist Thorkelsdóttir, born 1960, studied piano and harpsichord at the Reykjavik College of Music. She continued her studies in the United States, first at Hamline University, St. Paul, Minnesota, then composition with Lejaren Hiller and Morton Feldman at the State University of New York in Buffalo and at Boston University with Theodor Antoniou and Lukas Foss. After having completed her studies Mist embraced Icelandic musical life, teaching and being active in various artistic organisations as well as in composing. She received commissions from performers and organisations in the USA and in Europe. Currently Mist Thorkelsdóttir is a member of the board of the Icelandic Composers Society and she is Dean of the Department of Music at the Reykjavik Academy of the Arts.

I am always looking at nature, it plays a big role. As a musician I am part of this creation, my way is to express it through music and my place is to add to this beautiful creation we live in.

Mist Thorkelsdóttir[1] was born in 1960 in Urbana, Illinois, USA, as the daughter of the Icelandic composer Thorkel Sigurbjörnsson, currently one of the 'grand old men' in Icelandic composing. Her mother is American and her parents met when her father studied piano and composition in the USA and her mother studied Education to become a teacher. Mist has one brother who is six years younger, works in financial business and lives in London.

"I grew up in a very large family. My father is one of eight children, who are all very close. There are 72 grandchildren, including myself. My grandfather was bishop of Iceland. My parents are still alive and my father is very active. He just finished a big orchestral work that will be premiered by Vladimir Ashkenazy with the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra at the beginning of June. My mother taught at an international school in Iceland, run by the American embassy. Eventually she became Principal of that school. She retired two years ago. In a way I am in a similar position to that of my parents: both running a school and being a composer."

A childhood and adolescence full of music

Mist was six months old when her parents moved to Iceland, so she grew up there. In Iceland her father started working as a pianist and a teacher. "Most musicians in Iceland who are younger than 60 have studied with him in some capacity, be it music history or music theory. He was one of the teachers of the Reykjavik College of Music, which is now the preparatory school for the Academy. But at that time it was the highest level of music education in Iceland." Her father was, amongst other things, active in electronic music and worked internationally, in places ranging from Stockholm to California.

Mist's childhood was full of music. "My father was a pianist and active in creating new music in Iceland. There were often rehearsals in our house, with friends coming to play chamber music with my father. He listened to a lot of music and I was often sitting with him while he made me follow the scores. So I learned to read scores probably at the same time that I learned to read words. He would ask me where the principal part was. As a child I would be very involved in those musicians' talk. I grew up with it totally. It was actually incredible and it helped me very much in my music education to have learned in this way."

Mist's parents travelled in the summer, in order to earn money; teachers did not get paid in the summertime. "My father always had work in other countries during the summer months. Sometimes my brother and I spent the summers in Minnesota with my mother's family. In other years we would travel with my parents."

Mist went to primary school, where there was a singing class. As a small child she started playing the piano at home and she got formal piano lessons when she was eight years old.

At the age of six she had had violin lessons, which didn't work out: "I went to those violin lessons a few times without practising, and I was scolded by the teacher. So I told my parents that I did not want to play the violin anymore. Actually I had no idea why I was scolded. I was playing the thing, but not practising it. My parents then cancelled it. They did not ask for a reason. They were very concerned not to push me."

The first year Mist had a female piano teacher. Then she got lessons from Halldór Haraldsson, a well-known Icelandic pianist, in the children's music school in Reykjavik. "When I was 12 or 13, at the time when I could go to the conservatoire[2], he was hired there, so I followed him. I continued with him through the years, from my ninth till my twentieth year. Haraldsson is almost seventy years old now, and still active, also in new music. It was interesting to have lessons with him, especially when my mind was moving into the direction of composition. He had all this knowledge of modern music and often my lessons were about discussing new pieces. For me he was a fantastic teacher. He is open-minded, always reading and following the latest developments. He was very active in piano education, and was a member of the EPTA[3] board in Iceland." Mist found her teacher very motivating, and feels lucky to have had such a good instructor.

Mist sang in a children's choir, and when at the age of sixteen she came into grammar school[4] she started singing in another choir, which had the same director as the children's choir, Thorgerdur Ingolfsdóttir. "She is extremely important in Icelandic musical life and she has been very influential in my life."

The choir called the *Hamrahlidarkorinn* still exists. "It is connected to the grammar school where I was. This choir won several awards and was invited to festivals. Besides singing all kinds of repertoire the choir introduced a lot of new music, for example music written for it by Arvo Pärt.[5] So being in this youth choir was important for me, not just for the singing together, but because it enhanced my compositional insight by learning to perform all that new music."

Mist describes the role of music in her childhood and adolescence as central, "because of the musical life around the home and the school. I had a large part of my circle of friends through music. I met my husband in the choir and his sisters also met their husbands there. Now all our children sing in this choir. My whole being was centred around music. I was a page turner for my teacher and other pianists so I could attend all kinds of chamber music concerts. When famous stars came to Iceland, Icelandic pianists would accompany them, so I would meet them. I went with my father to symphony concerts and so on."

Gradually choosing for a profession in music

Until she was twenty Mist had never considered going into the music profession. She had it in her mind to study linguistics. At grammar school she had taken ancient and modern languages as main subjects, and she considered pursuing these. "I was not absolutely certain. Then an American cousin called me, just before graduation, and asked what I was going to do. I said I wasn't certain. I wanted to do linguistics as a major and do music for a little bit longer, just to finish a chapter of something. She would go to Hamline University, which was a private university and suggested we get to know each other better, and that I might study there as well, that we might even decide to live together. She was an only child and I was her only female cousin. So I thought, 'why not?' I will take a year or two, I will get to know this American side of my family and see what it brings. I knew that the University of Minnesota had a very good linguistics programme. I decided to go to Hamline, and then to the University of Minnesota, or back to Iceland. I went there and of course my life got centred around music again, and the friends I got all were through music, like a magnet. I ended up doing a BA in Music, in composition with piano as a second subject."

Mist went to Minnesota in 1980 and she earned her BA as soon as 1982, because she was far ahead in music. She had had the advantage of the cooperation of a number of small private universities, which gave her the opportunity to take a wide variety of music courses.

The overall tuition in Minnesota was quite traditional. Mist was very pleased with her composition professor Russell Harris. "He was basically retired at that time. His strong point was that he was so encouraging and positive. Lots of the compositional techniques you learn in other classes of course, but during the private

tuition he was endlessly encouraging, always trying to find a way for you when you were about to give up. Harris pointed out music to listen to, that is so important. What was also interesting in Minnesota was that in the end a whole recital was required with your own compositions. That was quite a big thing at that stage, a big learning experience."

After earning her BA in composition Mist started her linguistics study at the University of Minnesota in the autumn of 1982. She soon found out that this study did not suit her: "It just didn't touch me." She finished the first semester and at the end of 1982 went back to Iceland.

New choices

"I came home, and it turned out that a pianist in one of the small community music schools had fallen ill, so until the spring I took over her work. And then I decided that I wanted to continue in composition. I don't know exactly why, somehow it was not a real decision. It was just the way I felt most comfortable to express my musicality. Composition had never been taught in Iceland, and now a programme was starting at the Reykjavik College of Music, with my father as principle teacher, which was of course not ideal for me. So I decided to go back to the USA."

Mist came home at Christmas in 1982. In the spring of 1983 she went back to the choir, and with the choir she went on a big tour to Scandinavia. "In the choir, during the tour, I met one of my old friends again and fell in love with him. But I had decided to go back to the USA, so in the autumn of 1983 I said goodbye and went back to the USA, to Buffalo this time. My study was fantastic but I was young and my boyfriend was in medical school in Iceland and that just did not work. So again, I finished the semester and went home to Iceland, this time to get married to my boyfriend Sigfús Nikulásson."

Studying Composition with Morton Feldman

In the autumn semester of 1983 Mist studied with the famous composer Morton Feldman at the University of New York, Buffalo. She had met him for the first time when she was 13 years old. Her father had been at the University in Buffalo as a creative associate and had befriended Feldman.

Mist liked studying with Morton Feldman very much. "He was a wonderful composer and a good orchestrator and his style of teaching was such that one was basically with him every single day, in his home. He had those artists' workshops in his apartment with lots of students attending. It would be more than traditional lessons. His whole way of talking was extremely inspirational, always talking about music and art and about ways of seeing and hearing things. He discussed connections between music, sound and nature. I felt very inspired being close to such a person."

Mist feels that the main thing she learned from him was about the idea of sound: 'What music sounds like rather than how it is structured or the methods you use,

but the idea that music is for the ears. Not having a score that looks beautiful, but what comes up. He required us to bring our scores written in very light pencil. And he would simply erase. He would discuss with us things like: 'What is this, why is this trumpet playing that there?' He made you think about sound. It was so different from what I had ever encountered. I can see how much I learned during those sessions in those four months. At the time I was not at all happy with this 'erasing attitude' and did not really feel he had the right to question me in such a way. Now I understand, because soon afterwards I realised that I had taken over this kind of *chain of thought* and I think that I have used the idea of asking myself that type of questions ever since. I remember another thing that I did *not* like and which made it easier for me to pack up and leave. He said: 'I am an old man and I have no children. I want my students to be my children and to continue my music.' And that was absolutely not what I wanted to do. I was not like a disciple with a religion. I think maybe that generation was in a way a bit sensitive to it. So anyway the decision to pack up and leave was not a hard one. I learned a lot from Morton. And probably because I had quite a bit of music in my background I probably learned more than other students in such a short period of time."

Working in Iceland, having a family and going back to the USA

Her husband was still in medical school in Iceland when they got married and Mist started teaching and doing several other things in music. "I got on the board of the *Young Nordic Music Days*, a festival alternating between Scandinavian countries. That is how I got to know other young Nordic composers and musicians. I was also involved in a new music society, called *Musica Nova,* organising concerts. It was a great advantage for me to know so many people through my father. Today we are all colleagues in academies and universities, but we have known each other since our young days when our very first compositions were performed and we would be sitting together in the bar, either crying or celebrating."

In 1986 Mist's daughter Gudrun was born and in 1988 her son Thorkel. The birth of her son postponed the family's going abroad for a little while. Mist's husband Sigfús had meanwhile finished medical school, including his internship in Iceland, and wanted to specialize somewhere abroad. Mist was planning to do a master's degree but had no particular idea about where she would like to go, so she decided to wait for her husband's decision where to go, first. He decided on Boston and in 1989 the family moved to Boston. In 1991 Mist would enter Boston University to earn her master's degree.

Period in Boston from 1989 till 1999

Mist would stay in Boston for nearly ten years. Her husband's specialisation in pathology at Harvard University took five years and after that he was offered a job. "An American doctor's salary was tempting for us. We lived fifteen minutes from

downtown Boston in an upper middle class area. It was a wonderful place to live, with many interesting professional people all around us. People took time off to raise their children or they took a nanny. So either husband or wife was at home. The schools depended on parent participation. All around me there were people who could do this. We had stimulating discussions at the playground when our children were playing. Those were good years. I got to know composers, performers, and writers."

"I was at Boston University from 1991 to 1993, with Lukas Foss as my professor for composition. That generation of American composers was very much into experimentalism. Foss was a good conductor as well, premiering many new pieces. He is still alive, he was a friend of Cage, Bernstein and Feldman. At that point I had already been working so extensively as a composer that I was perhaps not learning so much, but because he was such a good conductor and had almost a century overview of trends, I learned quite a bit from him. But in terms of composing, I think there is only so much somebody else can formally teach you. I think I was basically there to get this degree and to get to know people. Probably my style developed. But I knew quite well where I was going because by that time I was already getting so many opportunities and commissions."

Building her career, going back to Iceland

Mist felt she was trying to build a career more in Iceland than in the United States and that she did this on purpose. "My idea was that we would be going back. Maybe this was less and less urgent for Sigfús and more and more so for me. I was maintaining contacts in Iceland and going there, having my music performed there and in Scandinavia. I felt very strongly that I was an Icelander, and felt sort of duty bound to the country. I don't know why, but most Icelanders have that. Existence in Iceland is very difficult, it is a harsh country and we don't have any national resources. The weather and the darkness are harsh, and nature is as well. People are killed at sea, through volcanic eruptions or glacial rivers flooding and things like that. Somehow this survivor's instinct, that people have the feeling they must live for the country, appeals to me. Perhaps it is ridiculous but that is how we Icelanders feel."

In 1995 Mist's third child was born, a son called Sindri. "After the youngest was born I became very restless. The idea of having a child and not being surrounded by our big family, like I had been during my childhood did not feel good. More and more I felt that it was time to go home. In 1998 my uncle was inaugurated bishop of Iceland and I had a commission from the cathedral, so I went home in the autumn of that year. I had this piece for the inauguration with me. The children were with me, and my husband came at some point, because we would spend Christmas in

Iceland. I then started to look around for houses and a day before Christmas I dragged my husband to a house and we decided to buy it. Well, actually we went to see it and I said kind of: 'I am going to live in this house and you can come with me if you want to.' I felt so strongly about it. We went back to the States and I came back in the spring with the children. My husband had to hand in his notice and came in September; we then moved into the house. We had first seen it in the darkest winter days and after that not anymore, so there were all kinds of surprises when we moved in. My husband was lucky because he immediately got a position in Reykjavik. He had a lot of experience, which was a big advantage. The salary scales in Iceland were of course incomparable to those in the USA. That made me shaky in a way, but we both felt that it was absolutely right what we had done. The older children were going to be teenagers and we felt that they should be Icelandic. At first they had not liked moving at all. But they had a lot of cousins here and they quickly made friends. We had always talked Icelandic to them at home. And I had been careful about them learning to read in Icelandic before they went into the American schools. They did not have language problems and everything went well."

Mist quickly started building on her career. She got a government stipend for a year right away, in order to compose, and she had many commissions, for writing solo music, chamber music, orchestral and choral works. "Work lined up, which was wonderful. I did some teaching to earn money, but also because it is interesting for your contacts. I was elected for the Icelandic Composers Society right away as well." Her latest work is a 'baby opera' for children from two to six, full of beautiful melodic lines and with a lot of possibilities for the children to sing along.

Back with the family

"It was good and bad to be with my family again. In the past I could do what I wanted, but here in Iceland with close family ties there is a family engagement every week. You miss family related events when you are not around, but they take up a lot of time when you are back. Three weeks ago my grandmother died, she was 95 years old. She was fine till the end of her life. My grandfather is as old as she was and is still alive and well. Her funeral became a weeklong festival, with a big extended family of one hundred people eating together and saying goodbye to my grandmother. It was a kind of celebration of having had this wonderful mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. We had such great times together. You feel so strongly how important those ties are, having a very common bond and at the same time being in completely different areas of life. I felt that my children should have that. Family is extremely important to me. My husband's sister and her husband live close to us. Our children are of the same age. Dinner is often together, also with the grandparents. The children will call, not to ask what there is for dinner but

where are we eating. We eat quite late, but we try to always have a set table and candles, with people around the table, and conversations going on with a lot of generations."

Important influences and the role of music in life

Mist regards her father as an important influence in her life. "Not so much in a direct way, but through the life we had. My mother incorporated herself in that musician's life. She went with him to at least five concerts a week, and she also moved to Iceland as an American. My father's family and friends became hers as well."

Mist's grandfather was influential for her as well: "As a child I spent a lot of time with my grandparents. Both my parents were very busy, my father worked odd hours. My grandfather was the bishop of Iceland, a poet and a scholar and every day I would take long walks with him. He would then recite poetry and he discussed scholarly matters with me. That happened at any age during most of my life. Especially during my teenage period I would live with my grandparents for days. My parents travelled quite a bit during that time. My father was quite active in the Scandinavian music community and my mother would go with him. It was also convenient for me when I was in school and there were events after school and in the evenings. We lived in a suburb of Reykjavik and we did not have a car. In winter I would have had to walk home for forty minutes, so I had a room with my grandparents, they seemed to have endless space. But these walks with my grandfather I will never forget. One of the first things I would do when I came to visit from the USA is take a walk with my grandfather. He is still very active, giving a course at the University of Iceland each winter, publishing a book per year. On several occasions I have been asked to write for choir and I asked him to write me a poem for that."

All her teachers were influential as well, very much so the youth choir conductor Thorgerdur Ingolfsdóttir. "The way she works as a fantastic musician, the way she teaches, her understanding of life. She was in a certain way a role model for me. You can see that reflected in so many people who are with her. My two oldest children sing in the *Hamrahlidarkorinn* and my youngest son now sings in the youth choir. After his first rehearsal he came home with stars in his eyes, describing this choir rehearsal and the magic of it and I felt that it is still working."

Music is central in Mist's life, she feels fortunate to be able to combine her professional life with her passion. "Music is part of my being, I am very involved with the work. Music is in the home; we listen to it, the children play instruments, we go to concerts, I am composing and there are a lot of other musical activities. I find it difficult to say what role it plays, because it is part of my existence. I love travelling and I like to fish, fly fish. So music is not the only thing I do."

The process of composition

Although she is extremely fruitful as a composer, currently Mist only has time for commissions for specific compositions, which for her is different than being totally free in writing: "You are mostly bound to certain instruments, or people or occasions, and I feel very strongly that you have to respect it when you are commissioned to write for a certain occasion. An artist can do what he wants, but I have another feeling about it, especially when it is related to the church." She does not find it important in case of a commission, to know for whom she is composing. "It can add something, but in a way it is freer not to know, and not to be bound by that. When I get a commission for something specific I think about it for a while and then start to jot down some ideas and thoughts. That can be anything, musical fragments or rhythms, whatever. I don't have a kind of system, so I don't work systematically. Then slowly an idea takes form, sometimes fast, but most often slowly, it depends on how interested I am in the concept and the instrumentation. And usually at some point I sit down and begin to write. As a rule I am quite clear in my mind about what's going on when I do that. I prefer to have a slot of time when I compose. I write and I go about it instinctively as it takes shape. I need to be able to continue, to follow it through. It is difficult when I am interrupted, because it is difficult to get into it again, it is not a system. For me composing is not an agonising process at all. It goes easily. That has some dangers as well, because sometimes it goes too easily and then afterwards I think that I should have worked on it harder. I never revise a composition. When you work easily it can become sloppy. I have learned to be very careful of that. I am not a perfectionist as a composer; I am happy when people love my music. I met kids who told me that they love to sing things I wrote for the children's choir."

Mist writes her composition and then copies it on the computer. She is very decisive about this order of events. "When I teach composition I require that my students write. I want to see the written score before it is put into the computer, because no matter how well you know those programmes, there are things that you cannot express so easily, and I want to see where their mind is going. You can see it in these little nuances like the space between the notes, where in the computer it will be all equally spaced when, for example, I know that it would have been a little bit longer here or there. That is the way I see it for myself too. It is a kind of instinct. What helped me is all this experience of listening to music and looking at scores, already as a young child. There is so much that one somehow senses. It is indeed some kind of tacit knowledge. I really feel that, for example during festivals, one can *hear* the music that is directly composed at the computer, there is some kind of regularity in irregular rhythms, it is a different kind of music, what I always call festival music."

Learning

Mist's life has been full of intuitive and informal learning; she mainly grew up with

learning about music in a very broad and organic way. "Having seen the music of old and new compositions, of Mozart, Mahler or Penderecki, you later go to a class and hear teachers talk about the structure and you know that this is happening in the compositions. It is based in me. You can compare it to colours; you don't have to begin teaching an art student what the primary colours are. Of course I have learned through courses in school, at the conservatoire and in my university education. It is always helpful to learn and to have labels. You do not always realise what you know. It is important to have good teachers who put you on the track of listening. Listening to music, especially to live performances is important. I try to stress it to the students as well, because I feel that it has been so important for me. It is important not to get stuck. You have to know a lot of other music. That is one thing that inspiring teachers teach you. I often find that today's students don't listen enough and don't have enough repertoire and examples in their heads. Listening and reading are important tools."

The Icelandic Academy of Arts

In 1999 the Icelandic Academy of Arts was founded in Reykjavik. The first part that was realized was the department of Fine Arts, followed by the department of Drama in 2000. In 2001 Mist was, together with another composer, approached by the board of the Academy to make a study about the realisation of a Department of Music, in terms of offerings within the curriculum and also in the light of the Bologna Declaration.[6]

> We drew up a kind of design of the programme and gave a report on that. Then in March 2001 I was asked to give shape to the music department, the first student should come in by September. I got a phone and a computer. I spent the following months doing this, and after that I did the advertising, wrote a curriculum, bought instruments and hired teachers. It was an interesting challenge, and I never imagined that I would go further into this. There were all kind of things I wrote down, like 'the director will have to…', etc. Like school rules for example. The first poster we had as an advertisement for new students I made myself, because there was no time to have it designed and printed. I put a picture of my son with his violin on it and tried to combine traditional with new perspectives in the design.
>
> When the position for director was advertised in July first I did not apply. But somehow I had started to feel close to the new students and finally I did decide to apply. Then I had an interview and I started thinking it all over and talking with my husband about it. He said: 'You are so deep into it now, wouldn't you want to pursue it?' I then decided to do it for one term. I was appointed and I had to do all those things I had thought out for the director! But one learns. I got involved with the Nordic Academies, attending their

meetings, and the colleague directors became important mentors for me. I immediately had a warm working relationship with my Nordic colleagues. I discussed many issues with them and got a lot of response. Peer learning indeed. On the occasion of the first graduation of the Music Bachelor's here in Iceland they all came, which was wonderful. The first three years consisted of learning every step of the way. Dealing with the Ministry of Education, assessment stuff, what makes a degree, things I had never thought over. My contract was renewed after three years. The next stage is the master's, so at this point you cannot have somebody new, I need to do that. There are always new things coming up, each month. That is lifelong learning! I had to learn things like institutional language, administrative and financial stuff. Probably the only angle I really dislike in this job is the financial side of it. Making the yearly budget gives me a real headache. Fortunately I have good people working here.

I never thought I had leadership skills. I remember my panic attack before the first staff meeting. 'What is expected of me when I go there?', I thought. Decision-making and having to do difficult things, like firing someone you hired, you must be able to do that. I think that the key to dealing with leadership is intuition, I respect people very much and I show them that. When difficult things come up… it is comparable to raising your children, you don't tell them what to do, you try to arrange it in such a way that they find out for themselves. Direct them, maybe it is a kind of mothering… In this kind of role I think women have more intuition than men. You can take courses, but then you get confirmation of what you already know. I think it is easier for a woman to be a director than for a man. Because as a woman you can see different sides to where the situation could go, and sometimes you take the wrong track, of course. But male leaders often decide things and allow no discussion and when it does not work they panic.

Aims for the future

Mist knows that in the end her aim is to compose. It is very difficult for her to find time to compose in her current job. Her shorter term aim is doing her work at the academy, especially to get the master's programme running. She tries more and more to delegate and make professors responsible for longer term commitments and tasks. "My challenge is to enable myself to disappear and to make myself redundant. As a director you can serve for three terms and then the position is open again. But I think that I will want to leave. You have to continue developing, and so does the institution. Different kinds of ideas have to come in. We are very connected to society as a whole, but once you are in here you get more and more institution-centred and new people need to come in from outside with fresh ideas."

"I am satisfied with this wonderful department of music, it is not only my doing, but it has been my direction. Graduation concerts have a high level and I am proud of that. I had to fight to change things, like once in front of eighty music school representatives, answering hostile questions from hostile male music school directors, people who had reckoned to become professor at the academy and whom I sometimes had known my whole life. Now that is over and my work is acknowledged. That gives me great personal satisfaction, because it was a huge challenge."

Changes in the cultural environment

Mist sees changes in the cultural environment developing in a positive way. The musical and cultural life in Iceland is quite young. A big change will be the construction of a concert hall and an opera house. New audiences have emerged: "When I was growing up my father and his friends organised concerts. Now we have several fantastic new music ensembles. An audience has developed to listen to those concerts. Theatre and music work together. There is baroque music performed on period instruments. People go and study abroad and everybody basically comes back educated and serves the country, building up the cultural scene. Understanding for culture is growing in the ministries. There is a financial boost in Iceland which was not yet there five years ago. Now there are extremely wealthy cooperations in Iceland and they have opened up a lot, knowing that it is important to put money into the arts. This has changed the situation in Iceland very much."

Mist speaks of 'a huge boost in Icelandic music opportunities'. The basic contents of the profession have not changed according to her. You still have to be a talented and well educated musician and you have to have tuition at a young age. She regrets that music education is very expensive, and that children sometimes drop out for that reason.

"The lines between disciplines have become less clear and the connection between the arts and society is quite strong, and those opportunities are also due to the relatively young culture in arts in Iceland." Mist feels that there are two sides to being a young musical culture in arts: "In one way perhaps, we have some complexes about not having a long history and are afraid of not doing things well enough, on the other hand it gives much freedom for every aspect of Icelandic cultural life. You see it in everything, also in the way people perceive careers. The only job opportunities here a hundred years ago were those of farmer, fisherman, teacher, priest or doctor. So many jobs now are relatively new."

Ultimate motivation

"When I describe myself as a musician I describe myself as a person. I am very

open, creative and positive in my outlook on life. I am communicative and I use that for my music. I write for the people who listen and for the people who play. I want them to enjoy performing it and I want the performers and listeners to be touched in some way. I am thrilled with beauty in life. I love it when the weather is sunny, the ocean and the mountains and this non-sunset which we have here in Iceland, when everything becomes very pink, and the sun travels along the horizon behind the very blue mountains and then rises again. Somehow I think it is extremely important to me, the beauty in mankind, in all creation. I don't make statements, unless they are statements which I believe can make life better, and I don't want to aggravate a situation. I am always looking at nature, it plays a big role. As a musician I am part of this creation, my way is to express it through music and my place is to add to this beautiful creation we live in."

Interview held May 12, 2006 in Reykjavik

1 Meaning: daughter of Thorkel. This is the Icelandic name-giving. Men are called 'son'.
2 The Reykjavik College of Music, which was the conservatoire. Until the Academy was founded that was the highest level, and music teachers could graduate there. Currently it serves as a preparatory school.
3 European Piano Teachers Association.
4 The school system in Iceland consists of two grades, from the age of 6 to 15 is the first grade; from 16 to 20 is the second grade.
5 Well-known Estonian composer of contemporary music.
6 Declaration of 1999 of European Ministries of Education for realising the BaMa structure Europe-wide.

Henk Meutgeert

Composer, arranger, conductor and pianist Henk Meutgeert was born in Kampen in the Netherlands in 1947. He studied classroom music teacher training and piano at the Zwolle Conservatoire with Rudie de Heus and arranging with Frans Elsen. He was pianist of the famous 'Skymasters' and many more radio and TV orchestras. He accompanied famous soloists such as Dizzy Gillespie, Mel Torme, Freddie Hubbard, Lee Konitz, Toots Thielemans, Eartha Kitt and Georgie Fame. Henk Meutgeert was founder and leader of the Netherlands Concert Jazz Band and wrote many compositions for this ensemble, such as the suite 'Voyage of a Villager', a composition for NOS TV broadcast in 1989. He composed and arranged film and documentary music for a wide variety of musical ensembles. In 1996 a new orchestra was founded under Henk's direction: the 'New Concert Big Band'. The orchestra accompanied Joe Henderson in the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam in April 1996. The next big appearance of the orchestra was during the Holland Festival 1997, featuring two American soloists, Deborah Brown and Cedar Walton. Regular performances at the Concertgebouw followed, all very successful, which caused the Concertgebouw's management to invite the orchestra to become it's 'in-house' jazz orchestra. The name of the orchestra was therefore changed into 'Jazz Orchestra of the Concertgebouw'. From 1997 until today the orchestra performs monthly concerts at the Bimhuis in Amsterdam featuring a wide variety of guest soloists such as Lee Konitz, Bud Shank, Dick Oatts, Han Bennink, Misha Mengelberg, Eric Vloeimans, Michiel Borstlap, Peter Weniger, Georgie Fame etc. For these occasions Henk arranges guest soloists' compositions for the orchestra in his own highly original way. Henk Meutgeert won the most important jazz award in the Netherlands, the 'Bird Award' which was presented to him at the 1999 North Sea Jazz Festival.

Music is still my hobby, and this interest has never changed.

Family backgrounds

Henk Meutgeert was born in 1947 in the Dutch city of Kampen in a family of four children as a 'late arrival'. His oldest sister just died at the age of 76 and his youngest sister is 14 years his senior, being well over 70.

Henk's father was a carpenter and later became supervisor at the Department of Public Works. "Every morning at 6.30 he was picked up by a little bus. My mother took care of the family. I know nothing of my family, but I was never looking for it either. My father had been placed at a very early age in another family when my grandfather died. So my roots are nothing special. My father became quite old, my mother died in a traffic accident when she was 73 years old; she had Alzheimer's disease and was run over while waiting for a traffic light together

with my father. That was dramatic. I have of course strange ties to my siblings, because most of them had left home when I was born and my parents were so much older. There were some bachelor uncles around whom my mother took care of as well. I did not have an exemplary youth if I may say so. It was not what you would call cosy. I think I mainly brought myself up, I made my choices myself, and that is why I also made wrong choices. Until I came to the conservatoire and knew: 'This is where I belong'. In my youth I was lonely, an *Einzelgänger*; I still am an Einzelgänger."

Music during childhood and adolescence

In the middle of the living room there was an organ. Henk was fascinated by it and started to play it. "When I was four years old I could play the Wilhelmus[1] on the black keys, while my sister handled the pedals."[2] When Henk continued being so enthusiastic he got organ lessons from his uncle, who was an organist of one of the churches in Kampen, and who also taught at the music school and at a secondary school and led choirs. "I raced through the books, and when I was 10 or 11 years old my uncle felt that he could not teach me anything more and advised my parents to send me to a piano teacher." Henk's parents then bought a piano and decided that Henk would have lessons with Mr. Sleurink who was an organist and taught the piano at the local music school in Kampen.

First Henk did not like playing the piano, mainly because the instrument his parents had bought turned out to be very bad. It was difficult if not impossible to tune. Henk did not like the sound and longed to go back to the organ. "I remember that a period of decline then started and I did not like my piano lessons anymore. My teacher was nice enough, but I was never allowed to do anything else than what was written in the score, whereas in fact I really spent my time improvising."

After primary school Henk went to the MULO[3], which took four years. Growing up Henk played the piano better and better. Meanwhile when he was about fourteen years old, he was invited to play as an assistant organist during services in the church; he played psalms and improvised. He went to many organ concerts in the city, like those given by the famous Zwart family. "I had a friend at school who possessed nearly all the organ works of Bach. I listened to a lot of Bach at that time, which was great. But all I wanted to do more and more was to improvise." Henk also played Bach on the piano and in addition Chopin. "I liked romantic music, for example the *Mondschein Sonata* and those beautiful slow preludes of Chopin. I had a feeling for Mozart but found his piano sonatas boring. That changed later, of course."

After the MULO Henk took a secondary education in commerce because he somehow felt he wanted to do something in music, perhaps in the music business. He was asked by his art teacher to accompany the children's choirs he led, and Henk was good in that: "I could transpose easily and I could play in every key."

Learning as an autodidact and the discovery of jazz
Henk loved improvising and when he was 18 years old he started to play in the local dance orchestra. He got more and more interested in jazz: "It really entered my life. I started listening to Art Tatum, to Oscar Peterson and many others."

"I have no idea how I learned all these things. It was all my own doing. Later on I have often wondered how this happened in this way. At home there was no music listening at all. We only had a radio and I often listened to that. Later I realised that my lack of musical experience at home was a handicap; because of this I only came to learn about a lot of things later. Many of the people I played with wondered how I had gained all my knowledge. I just did my utmost to find roads for discovery, people to meet, music to listen to. My motivation was enormous, not just for jazz, but also for classical music. When I was 16, 17 years old I was a big admirer of Bach. Actually I did not know why, because I found it hard to perform his music. But I liked the sound and the structure. Take the fourth *Brandenburg Concerto* with the two solo recorders; that nearly finished me. Of course, after hearing the piece I would take the score to see how the music had been composed. So yes, I developed everything myself. It was not before I went to the conservatoire that I got good instruction in how to do things differently."

Going to the Zwolle Conservatoire
Finally, at the age of 22, Henk went to the conservatoire, thanks to his music teacher who told him that he thought the school for commerce was not the right place for him. This teacher brought Henk into contact with the director of the municipal music school in Kampen, who happened to be a piano teacher at the Zwolle Conservatoire as well. "I played for him and he told me that I would have to work hard, but that I could do an entrance examination in three months time for the preparatory year. I practised hard to play a programme by heart, did the entrance examination and was admitted to the first year."

By that time Henk still lived at home. He had no idea how his parents felt about this step; he was quite sure that his father was not at all pleased with it. "My brother took technical courses, one after the other, and my father was delighted about that. But that was not my life. My parents were old, they had no idea. When I was on television for the first time they were very surprised. It is hard to explain."

Henk did not have a clear idea about what the study at the conservatoire would entail. He took two principal studies, classroom music teacher training and piano, but he did not finish the first, because the combination of both studies was very heavy. Henk had chosen this combination in the first place because in the classroom music teacher training there were more theoretical subjects, which were studied more intensively. His piano teacher advised him at an early stage to stop classroom

music teacher training because it cost too much time, while the development on the piano went so well but he had insufficient time to devote to it. Henk did not find it easy to take the decision; "Thoroughness was part of me and I came from a family that was not rich." To earn some money he started to teach a few hours a week, at the same MULO where he had been a pupil. He only did this for one year, and then stopped, because he didn't like it.

First Henk had piano lessons with the director of the music school, who had brought him to the conservatoire, Mr. Van Dalen. After three years, when he stopped his classroom music teacher training study, he changed to Rudie de Heus. "The role of De Heus has been very important for me. He was very positive and tried to encourage his students to give their best. De Heus really crept under your skin and he seemed to feel what was best for you, in terms of repertoire for example. Later on I sometimes wished I could have had him as a teacher at an earlier stage. He was so stimulating. Things might have developed differently perhaps."

Henk was very satisfied with his education at the conservatoire. "The director, Jacques Reuland, was a leader with vision and a good composer as well. And he knew about getting money. He established a beautiful school with a Steinway grand piano in every room."

One of the things Henk was involved in during his study was initiating jazz into Dutch conservatoires, beginning with Zwolle. "Together with Ruud van Dijk, who is currently Head of the Jazz Department at the Amsterdam Conservatoire, I talked to Reuland, who then started jazz tuition within a faculty structure. That was 35 years ago, and soon after that other schools followed, often with the same teachers. It took some time before you could choose jazz as an official principal study."

Henk was around 24 years old when this first faculty tuition in jazz began, and he began to take arranging lessons from the famous jazz pianist Frans Elsen: "The first jazz teacher in the Netherlands." Frans Elsen gave Henk the very first indications about how to give shape to an arrangement. He took classical harmony as a point of departure. He taught Henk two hours per week. "This writing fascinated me. In jazz you often only have aural examples. I would hear Art Tatum and think: 'what do I actually hear?' You had to analyse it aurally, play it, *store* it and transpose it. Still now, as soon as I hear good fragments I want to know what it is; I listen to it, then play it and write it down. That also goes for certain sounds or colours for example. Every composer has his own colour. Bach is easily recognizable. In jazz many musicians have their own sound colour and approach. I recognise this clearly and keep studying it. Especially when someone does something very interesting with sound, I want to know all about it."

Henk got out of his studies at the conservatoire what he could. He also got interested in baroque music and took lessons in figured bass playing[4] with harpsichordist and organist Ton Koopman. He loved the period at the

conservatoire. "It went so quickly. I felt at home in the conservatoire; I made myself work hard and practised eight hours a day. Sometimes I would see people sitting on a terrace in the sun and felt that I would not allow myself to do that as well. In the evenings I would play jazz. Sometimes I really overdid it."

He is satisfied with his education: "What I have missed is due to my own fault. I played so much. I was continuously overloaded. The classroom music teacher training study is very demanding; I think at that time I had 28 lesson hours a week. I would love to have spent more time on music theory, but there was no time. Later I thought that if I would do it all over again, I would do it differently. I would work in a much more focused way. I still see what I need. At present I am studying a book on harmony by Walter Piston. I wonder how things are structured and what I missed at that time. I can even say that I do not find the book easy!"

Everyone around him had to find extra work in order to afford the study at the conservatoire and so did Henk. He still played in the entertainment orchestra in Kampen and when he was in his fourth year his first broadcast engagements emerged. "There were only few jazz pianists at that time who could read (scores, RS), so with my classical background I could easily replace someone. The broadcasting gigs were wonderful for Henk because they paid well.

Within five years Henk had received both his A and B diploma.[5] He was 27 when he graduated (1974) and then was given the opportunity to continue studies for his solo diploma[6], which he took on for a short while before terminating them. "I have always regretted that. I found myself too old for studies at that moment; later I regarded it differently of course. I think the work would have come in any case, I think, even after this extra study."

At the age of 22, just before Henk went to the conservatoire he met his wife, Josje. They soon married which also increased the possibilities of getting a house, which was needed for practice. After 20 years of marriage their son Matthijs was born. He is currently fourteen years old and in secondary school. "We ice-skate together, every Saturday morning,"

Developing a career as a jazz pianist

"At the conservatoire I certainly learned how to play the piano, but in jazz I had to sort it out myself. There were many good classical piano students at the conservatoire, the majority of whom played better than I did. So I thought: 'If there are already so many good classical pianists and I am good in jazz, why shouldn't I specialise in jazz?'"

In 1973 Henk landed in broadcasting more or less by coincidence. "In my fourth year at the conservatoire I established a big band in Kampen, called *Last Moment* and we took part in a competition in Utrecht organised by the TROS.[7] In the

recording van was the leader of the Vara Dance Orchestra, Charley Nederpelt, doing the sound engineering. The first prize was a performance in a radio programme and that was my *entrée* in the Vara Dance Orchestra. Then things started to develop. Once I entered and there was no pianist and I took over - those kinds of things. So actually from then on for 25 years I worked as a pianist. I had a contract with the broadcasting company. I became pianist of the jazz orchestra *The Skymasters* and first substitute in the *Metropole Orchestra*. I did all kinds of things over a long period, making commercials, even improvising for the morning exercises on the radio. I accompanied lots of musicians at that time, ranging from Rudolf Schock to Vera Lynn, and also many Dutch cabaret artists, like Adèle Bloemendaal, Jenny Arean and Willem Nijholt. So I had to learn to play in all imaginable styles." Henk continued to work with his big band for about four years, after which he was too busy and other leaders took over. Today the big band still exists.

Henk did not consciously plan his career, "not in the least. I just allowed it to develop", but did say 'no' to certain offers, like becoming a sound engineer or regular pianist of the Metropole Orchestra. He thinks he has a good intuition for what is good for him and what is not, but on the other hand: "Music is the only thing I am good at, and it gives me pleasure. Not that it is always fun. I often have deadlines to meet and that means working night and day. You never know what to expect while writing; the amount of work is often more than you think. I hardly ever have a day 'left over'. But perhaps this is also due to my own incapacity to plan." When he is overloaded with work Henk can sometimes feel jealous of people with 'nine to five' jobs.

Jazz Orchestra of the Concertgebouw

In 1996 a new big band started, with Henk as bandleader, called *The New Concert Band*. "We were very successful and in 1998 I was approached by Martijn Sanders, at that time the director of the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, who was an enormous jazz lover. He told me that he would like to see more of us in the Concertgebouw and then offered us to become their in-house jazz orchestra and suggested that we change our name into 'Jazz Orchestra of the Concertgebouw'. On January 24 in 1999 we signed the contract. It was enormously prestigious. We noticed it immediately through the commissions we got and through the attention of the media. We are subsidized by the government, though not very much, and we have a big sponsor."

Each month the orchestra plays in the *Bimhuis*[8] and in the *Melkweg*[9]. "We also play in the Melkweg in order to reach a broader audience. I have to write for those concerts, also for the soloist that is invited. I write arrangements, sometimes I make my own compositions. It is a lot of hard work. So when you ask me what I like doing the most, my first intuition is to think of all those things in the last ten years

that *had* and *have* to happen, now this, then that, continuously. This weekend I have a rehearsal at The Melkweg, Thursday a concert there. Then I go to Lithuania to conduct and give workshops. Immediately after I am back we will have Theo Loevendie and Christina Fuchs as guests, so I have to arrange for them at the beginning of May. One week later is the finale of the *Deloitte Award*[10] with three soloists, meaning three big pieces that have to be written. Last year we had 47 concerts with the jazz orchestra. I cannot do more, because in between there are many other things."

In July 1999 Henk received the *Bird Award* during the North Sea Jazz Festival in The Hague for his oeuvre, the development of his orchestra and his contribution to jazz in the Netherlands.

Crossover programmes with symphony orchestras

Henk is guest conductor of the Orchestra of the WDR in Cologne and since 2000 he is invited regularly to conduct symphony orchestras in *crossover* programmes combining different styles. Conducting symphony orchestras emerged more or less by accident. "I met Jaap van Zweden[11], who did a programme with the Orchestra of Eastern Netherlands in 1999, produced by a broadcasting company. At some point there were crossover programmes, where he had to play the violin, so I conducted. Then more orchestras followed."

Henk feels that the interest of orchestras in crossover has much to do with possibilities for subsidies, but there is also a demand from within the orchestra, he notices. "My programmes are well attended by the audiences, I am lucky with that."

It is not that the artistic leaders of orchestras give him a free hand in the repertoire. Most of the time they tell Henk what they want to hear. "For example, I did the *Queen Symphony* with the North Netherlands Orchestra which was not my idea. It was a piece originally written by an English composer on themes of the pop group Queen. So they then wanted a conductor who understands this music and knows how to lead it." Sometimes Henk is asked to compose for an orchestra. On these occasions he also performs his own arrangements. "I love those concerts, to work with a big group of people on all those wonderful colours."

Social skills are important, he feels. That goes both for his own orchestra as well as for those where he acts as a guest conductor. "It is important to realise that the time of the *maestro* is gone." In principle Henk is easygoing with his musicians. "There can be irritations which can be directed to you or to other musicians." Sometimes he takes the initiative to solve it, sometimes he waits: "Most of the time it is about futilities and they resolve themselves. When I am a guest somewhere these problems hardly exist."

Henk feels that working with students is easier than with professional musicians: "Students are so open, they are eager to experience something they have never experienced before. Every time I work with students I am pleasantly surprised by

that." Henk works about ten times a year with symphony orchestras abroad. This has been developing over the last five years.

Learning as a composer and an arranger

"I learn from going deeply into unknown material and from studying it in such a way that it has a relationship with your ears. For jazz the ears are critical; what you hear, how things are put together - that is really basic. It is important to have an open mind to different impressions. Actually you have to be open for everything that exists and combine that with sound."

When Henk has a commission for a composition he can work on it in different ways: "In any case it is not a matter of walking through the forest to 'get an idea'. Although I do get an idea occasionally. When I come home I write it down and then continue to work on it. It needs not to be a melody; it can also be a rhythmic motif for something I want to use. For the rest I collect all kinds of particular ideas and start to work directly at the computer. In the process of working out my ideas often good new ones emerge. The bulk of what I am doing is arranging, so reworking compositions of other people, but in general that is more transpiration than inspiration. I have a good musical imagination and I have also studied thoroughly what feels good in playing. When a musician gets his part he must feel eager to play it. When I write the parts I wonder what *I* would like if I were this or that musician. There is a lot of knowledge required, about instrumentation, possibilities, how things sound together, the registers sounding the best when combining instruments, acoustic circumstances. I work very hard on the knowledge of such issues."

Henk makes more arrangements than compositions. "That is because of the band. But actually arranging is composing as well. You receive a piece of paper with a melody and you are supposed to make it into a complete instrumental piece." When Henk makes an arrangement he has his ideals about colour and instrumentation, but the musicians who are going to play it have a role as well. "It really matters who is going to perform it, although a bit less than a while ago. I also feel that my music has to sound as I think it should sound. Perhaps that is a bit arrogant. In the past I wanted to know exactly who would be playing my arrangement, and now that can differ. I feel you have to let go of certain things. Sometimes it can be positive to establish that there are also different ways than you initially thought."

It happens that musicians come with proposals to change things in arrangements and Henk is very receptive to that. "I find that fantastic. I remember that once I wrote a passage for trombones in the middle register and suddenly I heard *glissandi* (gliding from tone to tone, RS). They had put them in the score themselves and I really liked it and of course left it in."

Henk does not work intuitively, but in a way where he can see the reasons for what he is doing. "I am quite conscious of what the result is going to be. Sometimes I wish that I could work more intuitively." Henk studies scores of other composers in order to learn about their compositional process. "I can go very far back in that, I will even look at a composer like Sweelinck for example; how did he do this, how did he solve that, how does he create ideas in sound? And then you have to keep in your mind many things that are of influence, like the instrument it was written for, with another tuning system for example. But I also learn by studying the scores of Ravel; he was a fantastic orchestrator. Some composers do what they do very consciously, others very intuitively. I study scores from totally different stylistic periods and I ask myself questions while doing that; I can look at a score of Tchaikovsky and wonder why he puts this little note apart, when the listener cannot hear it. Still he does that and he must have a reason for that, which I want to fathom." Henk is a great admirer of Russian composers, especially Rachmaninov, but also Prokofiev and Scriabin, whose soundworld appeals to him enormously. But he also loves French composers, like Fauré.

He cannot say that these composers are of influence on his orchestration. He loves to make orchestrations for the symphony orchestra and also use strings. "Last year I did a wonderful project with the Gelders Orchestra, called *An American in Paris*, for symphony orchestra and big band, and furthermore Ellington's *Sacred Songs* and a big suite of Ellington. I arranged it for symphony orchestra and big band. It was performed by the Jazz Orchestra of the Concertgebouw and the Gelders Orchestra with the singer Izaline Calister as a soloist. I love those projects, because then I can orchestrate. Nevertheless I keep listening to all other kinds of ensembles. Arranging is in the first place transferring material to another instrumental setting and you have to do that as well as possible."

Lifelong learning

Henk feels the need to work more on music theory and playing the piano. "I started to do that again, and I want to do it more. I want to go deeply into the material, in the classical piano music. It is from sheer interest. When I look now at a piano composition through all my own arranging and composing I look at it with different eyes. I have another view on using the notes; sometimes when I look at a composition I can grasp immediately why it is written in such a way. In the past I would just absorb it, now I consider it critically and ask myself what I will do with it. Musically Henk can grasp a piano piece easily, but technically not necessarily so. "I realise now what a fantastic time this is, when you are young and can each day practise for hours. That would be impossible for me now."

Henk's technical development went quite easily. "De Heus (Henk's piano teacher at the conservatoire, RS) once told me: 'If I would have had you when you were six I would have turned you into a fantastic pianist'. It would have meant a lot of less stress if I could have had my chances earlier in life. I kept feeling it would have been much better if I had started when I was younger, but you can never change that. I once talked this over with Micha Mengelberg[12] and told him that I had been too unconfident about my skills to go to study in Amsterdam. He told me that I should have done that nevertheless, because I would have developed much faster. Nowadays you see students aiming straight at their goal. I wish I had done that. Sometimes I wonder what would have happened if my family circumstances had been different, when for example I would have gone to grammar school, which I wanted so much, and had learned Latin and Greek. I was so interested… But… when I look back to how my life has been until now, I can say that I am where I wanted to be. I wanted to become a professional musician, and that happened. It could have developed in a far worse way. I also have the experience of teaching, I take a lot of pleasure in that and find it a good experience. So I have no frustrations about either my musical development or career development. Music is still my hobby, and this interest has never changed."

Times are changing

Henk has always sought the borders and felt challenged to take on new things. Nevertheless he feels that in the world of classical music projects are easier to acquire and that jazz is seen as more of a marginal area. "Take the subsidy; a classical symphony orchestra will have five million euros a year, where our jazz orchestra gets 100.000 euros a year." Henk feels it is not only subsidy that is sometimes a bit unfair for jazz, but also the attitude of the media. "They want to pick up things where theatre is involved. If somebody does something crazy it is immediately picked up, no matter the artistic content." He feels it has always been like that, and that nothing has changed.

What has changed is how music is developing today. Henk feels that the influence of modern technology, like computers, MP3 players and so on, is enormous. "What you hear is so technical, not people's actual artistic work. I find that a very disconcerting image." The possibilities to perform are decreasing, Henk feels. "Chances are less. The stages become more expensive and less subsidized." He finds this very striking.

Writing for brass band, a new world

"I have learned a lot from working for different groups of people. A notable example is when I started to write for the brass band of the Salvation Army. I was involved in a Christian television programme and met totally different people from usual. I found that inspiring and learned from the experience; for example the social

aspects of music, the roots of music and its role in society. A brass band is closely connected to family and originally it belonged to mining communities. In the beginning I had no *feel* for this music. Now that has changed, my perspective is much broader. I feel this is very positive and perhaps has to do with age."

Short term and longer term aims and ambitions

"My problem right now is age. I am 58 and it seems that it was only yesterday when I studied. Then I think: 'How is this possible, what has happened during those 35 years?'" Henk feels that on the longer term he would like to have more space in his life, compose more, and perhaps in a few years leave the jazz orchestra, so that he can really choose what he wants to take on. He wants to continue studying piano music, and other music he loves. "I want to get rid of this enormous time pressure I always have." On the shorter term his ideal is to make a jazz opera with his own orchestra. "I don't know whether it will happen, because it costs a lot of money, but I am trying".

Henk knows his weak point: "I can be reckless when making choices about what to take on. I find it difficult to say 'no' which often results in doing too many things and then suddenly realising that it is ten years later, while thinking: 'what am I actually caught up in?' Fortunately that has now improved. There is no harm in occasionally saying no."

Interview held April 13, 2006 in Lage Vuursche

1 Dutch national anthem.
2 These old fashioned home organs, called 'harmonium' were provided with air through foot pedals.
3 Middle General Secondary School.
4 Working out chords from a given bass line.
5 Comparable to a bachelor's degree.
6 Comparable to a master's degree.
7 A national broadcasting company.
8 Famous jazz stage in Amsterdam.
9 Idem, for pop music.
10 The main sponsor of the orchestra.
11 Violinist, former leader of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, nowadays a conductor.
12 Jazz musician and avant-garde composer.

Jiri Prchal

The Czech cellist Jiri Prchal was born in 1936. Between 1951 and 1962 he studied subsequently at the conservatoire and the Music Academy in Prague. After his studies he was appointed principal cellist in the Northern Symphony Orchestra in Teplice. In 1967 Jiri Prchal won an audition for a workplace abroad and was appointed second principal cellist of the Frysk Orchestra in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. He went to the Netherlands in 1968 and remained there from that time. In 1982 Jiri was appointed professor of cello at the Leeuwarden Conservatoire and after the merger of this school with the North Netherlands Conservatoire in Groningen in 1990 he started teaching in Groningen. By this time Jiri also became a member of the North Netherlands Orchestra, which had merged with the Frysk Orchestra. Jiri Prchal has distinguished himself nationally in the Netherlands in coaching young talented cellists.

It was as if I'd been newly born again when I let go of my ambitions to be a soloist and became a teacher. It is so gratifying.

Life, education and career span

Born in 1936 in Kolin, Czechoslovakia, currently the Czech Republic, Jiri Prchal discovered at a relatively late age his passion for music and in particular for the cello. He grew up with a sister who was four years his senior; his father was an architect. At the age of twelve, Jiri entered grammar school, but his education there ended brutally one year later, when the government decided to abolish all grammar schools in the country as being too 'bourgeois'. Secondary schools for all children were established instead, where Jiri felt very bored. He would feel this loss throughout his life.

Although more than once he was identified as a potential musical talent by a visiting group of professors from the Prague Conservatoire both during primary and secondary school, it was not until he was fifteen years old that Jiri started to play the cello. His direct motivation was a recording of the Dvorak Concerto performed by the cellist Gaspar Cassado. Music education was not stimulated at home, especially not by his father, who hoped that his son would follow in his footsteps; his mother, on the other hand, was encouraging and helped in the pursuit of his musical aspirations. After a half year of cello lessons, Jiri was admitted to the Prague Conservatoire.[1] He would spend six years there (1951-57). During this period, his parents divorced.

At the conservatoire, Jiri took lessons with Bohus Heran. Heran was an

accomplished cellist and principal cellist of the Radio Orchestra. Jiri was Heran's very first pupil at the conservatoire, so as a teacher Heran did not have much experience. Later he would develop into a fine teacher, even writing books and methods. For Jiri however, many things went wrong during this period: too many things were asked of him, and he had to play pieces that were far too difficult. Not enough attention was paid to acquiring the fundamentals and the workload was enormous. For each school year a specific repertoire was imposed; the fact that Jiri had just begun to play the cello was never taken into account. "I had to achieve the same results as someone who had already played the cello for seven years. That led me to force a great deal." This would eventually lead to serious physical problems with his left hand, which would remain an obstacle throughout his life. It was hard work and a very demanding time, not in the least because Jiri was also very ambitious.

In 1953 an event of far-reaching importance occurred: the world-famous cellist André Navarra came to visit the conservatoire. Navarra was a regular guest at festivals in Prague and had befriended Bohus Heran when they had studied together in Paris. Navarra listened to all the cello students with the aim of offering one a five-year fully paid stipend to study at the Conservatoire de Paris. To Jiri's utter amazement, Navarra chose him. His teacher was incredulous and several of his fellow students were quite jealous.

Only later was Jiri to understand why Navarra had chosen him: "I could not understand why I, who had only been playing the cello for two years, had been chosen. But as an adult, I came to understand that Navarra wanted to start with a *tabula rasa*, so he chose someone who was musical but who still had to learn and develop. Teaching a student who has been playing the cello for a long time is very different. I was just starting and young." Understandably, Jiri was deeply disappointed when the Czech government refused to let him leave the country. "It stuck with me. Later on I would fully understand the extent of the damage communism had caused."

In 1957 Jiri graduated *cum laude* and sought to enter the Prague Music Academy without success. For two years he attended the Janacek Academy in Brno, returning to Prague in 1959, when he was admitted to the Music Academy. Until his graduation in 1962 he would study there with the professors K.P. Sádlo and M. Sádlo. Following graduation Jiri immediately had to take up military service. His professor, Milos Sádlo, who was then a highly respected and influential musician in Czechoslovakia but who would later encounter major difficulties with the communist government, went with Jiri's mother to the Ministry and succeeded in arranging for a position in a Prague military orchestra for the young graduate. Jiri enlisted shortly after the summer of 1962.

It was while performing in the military orchestra that Jiri began to experience major problems with his left hand for the first time. As a result, in the spring of 1964 he landed in Teplice, a health resort 50 kilometres from Prague which was also reserved for military personnel. Here he was treated by Lidunka Mladkova, the doctor who would become his wife one year later. While he was recovering, he practised afternoons in the library, then auditioned for the Northern Symphony Orchestra in Teplice where he was appointed principal cellist. As soon as his military service was finished he could start with the orchestra; all this took place just before the summer.

Again it was a demanding period work-wise. Every morning Jiri rehearsed with the orchestra; in the afternoons he performed in the open air *Collonade Concerts* at the health resort, concerts which involved much sight-reading and virtually no rehearsals. While he learned a lot, Jiri found this period very difficult and tension-filled.

In Teplice, he took up teaching as well: he taught at the music school and began what would become a trademark of his later career in the Netherlands: coaching talent. One of his pupils in Teplice was Vladimir Leixner, (future) cellist of the Stamitz Quartet.

On the day his son Martin was born (July 10, 1967), Jiri auditioned for an international committee recruiting talented musicians who could work for a time abroad. Many orchestras in Europe were in need of good musicians and regularly came to recruit in Eastern Europe, and especially in Czechoslovakia.

The audition was organised by 'Pragokonzert', a national agency that coordinated international tours and work placements for Czech musicians. Jiri won the audition and was offered places with orchestras in Austria, Brazil, or the Netherlands. He chose the Netherlands because, compared to the two others, he felt it was "closest to the Czech heart". Being allowed to leave Czechoslovakia for the Netherlands as a musician was very unusual for the time. Most exchanges were limited to so-called 'friendly' (i.e. communist) countries.

Initially, Jiri went alone to the Netherlands, where he began as second principal cellist in the Frysk Orchestra, the symphony orchestra in the northern province of Frisia. He had no clue as to where he was going: "I looked at the map of Holland, and Leeuwarden[2] was not even on it!" Following the Russian invasion of Prague in August 1968, his wife Lidunka followed, along with son Martin and daughter Sacha, born to Lidunka's previous marriage.

In the Netherlands, the physical problems with his left hand started to take their toll again, and were diagnosed as *Dupuytren Contractuur*. In 1973 Jiri underwent two operations on his left hand.

One year before this, in 1972, Lidunka had been ordered by the Czech ministry to return home with her daughter. When the family gave no reply, they were summoned in 1973 to come back. This time they asked to postpone the return because of Jiri's recuperation. But this was not acknowledged: "We were told that Czechoslovakia is the best place to recuperate." Jiri and his wife then made a conscious decision to remain in the Netherlands. From then on, they were regarded as exiles by the Czech government and were sentenced in absentia to two years of imprisonment with hard labour. In 1974 the family obtained Dutch citizenship. Both children had their Czech citizenship restored later as they were not considered 'guilty'. Following the *Velvet Revolution* in November 1989, Jiri and Lidunka were able to visit Czechoslovakia once again. Although their relatives had been allowed to visit them in the Netherlands, Jiri's mother did not get permission to go while she was a factory worker; in total, mother and son would not see each other for seven years.

After his operation in 1973, Jiri's left hand remained paralysed for a whole year. He did extensive therapy: "I devised 'little machinery' and thought a lot about ways in which to make my fingers strong again. The professor who treated me was a marvellous man. He found curing my hand a challenge, and always sought his colleague's advice. Together they examined my hand. I showed them my little machinery and the methods I had developed." Jiri's wife subsequently discovered that the two professors had even dedicated an article to the case in a British medical journal.

"My second finger[3] remained slow. I could not lift it enough. But if I was able to keep my first finger[4] in place, it would work. Practising first on the table with my fingers, I then took an old cello fingerboard, to which I tied my thumb and first finger with elastics. In this way I worked on strengthening my second finger, and the first finger could not move. I practised and practised, and at a certain moment I contacted the director of the orchestra to ask if I could start again. I took a seat in the last stand, and played with elastics around my fingers. Nobody knew how I 'cheated' and I had to develop completely different fingerings from those I would have given my pupils."

Jiri remembers finding a drawing made by his son of his father practising at that time. On the drawing the father sits practising at the table, with the cello lying on the floor. "That suddenly saddened me a lot."

From 1974 onwards, Jiri started shifting his focus to teaching. The professor treating him advised him to give up his solo career, suggesting that as a mature musician he might focus more of his professional life on teaching. "At first, this was a huge disappointment for me. I did not want to give up my place as principal cellist. It was hard, because I hardly spoke any Dutch and wasn't eager to teach at that time."

Nevertheless Jiri heeded the advice. Till 1982, he would teach at the music schools[5] of Hoogeveen, Heerenveen, Drachten and Leeuwarden, and in 1982 he was appointed professor of cello at the Music Pedagogy Academy in Leeuwarden, later called Leeuwarden Conservatoire.[6] There he had several tasks: initially teaching cello didactics, then later working as principal study teacher, scouting for talent in the region, and even doing some conducting.

At the end of the eighties an important political decision was made in the provinces of Frisia and Groningen: the Frysk Orchestra and the Northern Philharmonic Orchestra, situated in Groningen, would merge, as would the conservatoires of Leeuwarden and Groningen. This meant that Jiri became a professor at the North Netherlands Conservatoire in Groningen and second principal cellist of the North Netherlands Orchestra. The merger of the orchestras was a shock for him. "We had done so much to prove our right to exist. We performed in small towns and worked hard. I only learned of this decision reading the newspaper." Jiri found the merger ultimately had a negative impact in Frisia.

Adaptation to the new workplace was not much of a problem for him. "I knew practically all my new colleagues." Nevertheless, it was impossible to continue the life he used to lead. "I used to rehearse in the morning, teach in the afternoon, and go out into the province in the evening to play. Now I first had to commute from Leeuwarden to Groningen each day." He decided to rent a room in Groningen, allowing him to stay overnight if necessary. Following the merger, Jiri reduced his orchestra position to half time.

As a result of a heart attack suffered in 1996 at the age of 60, Jiri chose to abandon his work with the orchestra, though he continued to work at the North Netherlands Conservatoire. In the meantime he had become nationally recognized as a teacher with a special gift for coaching talented young cellists. In 2000 Jiri retired from the conservatoire, although he is still sought out for advice and is a regular jury member for cello examinations.

Motivations and aims

Jiri's motivation was intrinsic as well as extrinsic: "I was passionate about music. In order to make ends meet in a difficult financial situation, I really had no choice but to take on a lot, despite the fact that I was not ready to do so. During my time at the Academy I started to present auditions and get experience. I played as a principal cellist in Teplice daily. I won the audition in Prague because I had worked so hard and gained so much experience. I was good at auditions. I was game for everything and was a good sightreader. Colleagues who played better but who had not had the opportunity to play as many solos might have won the audition if they had had similar opportunities."

Jiri's aims when taking up the cello as a profession were very clear: "When I was

young, above all else I wanted to be a soloist; I was very ambitious." But his motivation to become a teacher developed later on as a deeper intrinsic one: "if I had not had these huge physical problems I would not have become such a good teacher. I was forced to reflect on all aspects of cello technique due to my own physical problems."

Influences

Throughout his career, his teachers had a profound influence on Jiri. "I had idols as well, especially the French cellists, Navarra being the most important. But I also admired Fournier. A short while ago I heard a recording of Navarra playing Respighi. The recording dated back to 1966. I realised I was still as enthusiastic about his cello playing as I used to be. The secret is his 'vocal' approach. I discovered by reading a biography that Navarra studied voice as well as the cello. That explains a lot."

Navarra was an important role model, though Jiri never had lessons with him: "I met him a few times, we played at the opening of the Prague Spring Festival. There he was. We had to play Bach's Third Suite with 60 cellists, from memory. He sat very close to me, so I became very nervous. I could not talk to him; of course he did not recognise me from before. I cannot remember ever having been so nervous. I was not afraid of much, but that time I could hardly play. Navarra remained my hero throughout my life." Jiri got to know more cellists in Czechoslovakia: "I was less impressed by Tortelier and Rostropovich. But what do you know when you have just started studying? I always had Navarra in my head!"

Education

Next to the cello, other subjects taught at the conservatoire included ear training (solfège), history, counterpoint, piano, choir singing, harmony and languages (Russian). "It was really like school, everything was taught in classrooms, from year one to five." Jiri found the tuition at the music academy very interesting, with subjects as varied as children's psychology and art history. The former was taught primarily to maintain university status, as the academy did not offer teacher training. After five years at the music academy graduates were awarded a university diploma.

The individual cello lessons took place twice a week with other students often present. "The teachers formed a real team, I find that important and an example of good practice." The concept of *team-teaching* as well as giving students the experience to teach as an assistant would be embraced by Jiri later in his life as well.

Next to the individual cello lessons there were rehearsals with a pianist. Most of the time the main principal study teacher was present at these rehearsals as well. And: "every week there were concerts, attendance at which was compulsory. You had to be there, and your teacher decided if you were going to play or not." These

concerts took place in a beautiful hall at the Rudolfinum.[7] "Just imagine… I had lessons in a hall where Dvorak had taught!"

The learning environments of both the conservatoire and the academy were directed towards educating soloists and not teachers or orchestral musicians. Despite the severity of the examinations, Jiri graduated *cum laude* from the conservatoire. The final examination at the academy included performing as a soloist with orchestra. While convinced that the requirements were demanding, Jiri believes the level of that time cannot be compared with today's high standards. There was no pedagogical tuition. Although Jiri started to teach, he had to sort learning to teach out for himself.

Being in a 'soloist-directed' learning environment was actually a disadvantage for Jiri: "I was neglected, I fought with my handicap, so I could not fully enjoy the great quality of the lessons." Jiri uses the word 'neglected' to describe the fact that many aspects of cello training were beyond his comprehension. "I had to play pieces that were far too difficult. I was eager to learn and could learn well. I just barely managed to stay on top of things; I never was even the least bit ahead. I had not started to play at a young age, so I had no background or experience upon which to draw. I was always starting from the beginning!"

This was also the case with counterpoint and music analysis. "I could not compose, nor could I play the piano properly. Some of my fellow students had already started playing the piano at an early age, and could already begin to conduct. They could score one success after another. I could not and just barely kept pace. My sole advantage was that I was a fast learner."

Not being involved in music from an early age proved problematic. "My teachers told me that for string players key learning takes place between the ages of six and eighteen. I strongly believe, given my experience, that this late start constituted my single biggest handicap."

Teachers

"I respected my teachers tremendously. Milos Sádlo was a man with a big heart and a real artist. K.P. Sádlo[8] had an impressive personality; he was very political and influential. A great professor, he was also a jury member at the top cello competitions. He heard everything down to the last detail, even when you thought he was asleep."

Most lessons Jiri received from K.P. Sádlo, as Milos Sádlo was often on tour. "Milos was a real soloist. He worked with us and then said, 'Okay, you must continue this with *tata*'"(Czech for 'daddy'; here Jiri refers to K.P. Sádlo, RS). From time to time, Jiri replaced Sádlo's son teaching in the music school.

Jiri describes K.P. Sádlo as a very stern and demanding teacher, but found he was able to cope. "Sometimes it was terrible, and he was unbearably rigid with his son.

But we loved him. I was scared of him, but I loved him at the same time. He really took care of me. My mother could always contact him when she was concerned about something. Later when I went to the Netherlands he kept in touch."

K.P. Sádlo even intervened in the private lives of his students. Jiri believes this demonstrates the extent of Sádlo's concern for his students' development. "He was the 'strict father' type. His students did not dare have a relationship with a girl. He immediately knew when you had a date! I sometimes wonder if he had us followed!" The professor even went so far as to interfere and indeed influence his students' choice of spouse, as he had strong ideas about the kind of wife a talented musician needed. Not surprisingly, his own wife constituted such a role model: "she was an angel and was always there for us. But when we confided in her, we would later notice that Sádlo knew what we had shared." Fortunately, Jiri did not suffer too much from this: "I was not enough of a star for him to interfere with my life to that degree." Jiri says he was not a slave to his studies, despite his fear and respect for his teacher. "I soon discovered what they (his teachers, RS) should not do with me."

Jiri reflects back a great deal to his teachers. Although he regards them as great personalities, he also recognizes that they made mistakes, mistakes which he tries to avoid. "Everything I experienced I analysed and tried to learn from by choosing what was best. But of course this awareness only came later."

The feeling that he had to make up for his late start pursued him, so following his graduation Jiri kept taking lessons from Sádlo in Prague while living in Teplice. In the Netherlands, from 1971 to 1973 he took lessons with Tibor de Machula, principal cellist of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, with the hope that De Machula might help him eliminate the problems with his left hand. The lessons were very influential: "they took three hours on average, and often involved a great deal of debate."

Learning…

"I am a reflective person and like to keep learning. I can observe myself very well. Even today I love to visit masterclasses given by other professors. I studied the Suzuki Method[9]; I visited the courses given by the Silvai brothers in London[10], so I actually learned a great deal at a later age."

The orchestra was also a place where Jiri learned a lot. "I taught my students what it means to be a member of an orchestra."

Jiri's style of learning changed over time: "I used to repeat passages over and over until I mastered them. Later my order changed: I would first study the score, listen to good soloists and think about good musicianship. Good musicians do not follow a prescribed path, for instance with fingerings: they allow themselves to be guided by their inner imaginative skills. That is why I practise solfège every day.

First you must hear from within how it will sound. Then you start thinking about fingerings, and for me this means of course my 'alarm fingerings'." Another difference in his learning style involves intuition. "I used to intuit a great deal, nowadays this is much less so."

When Jiri joined the Frysk Orchestra he had to do many things he had never done before, like playing the *basso continuo* in Bach's St Matthew's Passion. He was and is very capable of learning himself: "A well trained principal cellist can sightread everything. I sometimes practised ten hours a day, especially during my first year in Holland, when I was there alone. I always listened to good examples. I found everybody better than myself. At a later stage I discovered this was not always true."

He replies to the question of whether he was ever satisfied with himself saying: "Sometimes I was proud. But it was as if I'd been born again when I let go of my ambitions to be a soloist and became a teacher. It is so gratifying." The choice to teach was a clear one for him. "If you do not naturally *enchant* people as a cellist it is better to invest your talents in your students rather than fighting a losing battle. Very talented students often play a lot better than I do!"

Artistic learning took and takes place through practising, listening and reading, as well as through visits to the conservatoire when there is an interesting guest teacher, or through attendance of examinations. Jiri learns much in an implicit way, in the sense of 'caught, not taught.' "I am still a student." Jiri believes the orchestra is the place where artistically you can learn the most, due to the different conductors, each with his own styles and views on music. "Take modern music; in order to conquer the score you have to work together step by step. You cannot possibly understand such music by listening to it but once, you need to work constantly, learning it gradually. Great musicians ('stars') are often not able to learn in a flexible way. There are exceptions, musicians who have an exceptional ability to move from the demands of solo performance to participation in an orchestra – Yo Yo Ma demonstrated this brilliantly when, following his solo performance with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, after the interval he joined the orchestra's cellos' last stand for the second half of the concert!"

Jiri practises his artistic skills by improvising daily. It is something he regrets not having learned earlier. "I still want to grow and to be able to share this skill with my pupils."

His needs as a lifelong learner are still extensive: "I still need to improve my inner imaginative skills when I see a written score, I really missed out not having learned to play the piano." Nevertheless Jiri does not prefer to learn through listening to

recordings or CDs. "Listening is *live*." He regards reading as important as well: through biographies of great musicians, composers and performers, and learning about "how talents like Jacqueline Dupré, Mozart, and others worked." Great musicians who are examples for him need not necessarily always be cellists; pianists like Wilhelm Kempff are also important role models. He considers the study of methods as essential as well.

"In the past I was taught to start early in the morning. There was a myth that if you missed the morning hours, you could not make up for it during the day. That changes your personality. I work best in the morning. If I do not do anything during the morning, I inevitably feel I have wasted the whole day, although I am retired! I have the feeling that I have to work the whole day. I allow myself to do something which I find very interesting only during the evening. I have tried to consciously unlearn this, for example by forcing myself to start the day with physical work."

…and teaching

Jiri's students are a strong incentive for him to continue learning. "I have taught remarkable talents during my career. My challenge was to teach them really well. Teaching a very talented person is quite difficult. They are mostly not easy nor very disciplined. You often see that they have trouble functioning as artists."

At the academy he did not learn to teach. "No. I think I have a talent for it. It took me a long time to realise that this was what I wanted to do, although I knew that I was good at it. I have always been on a pedagogical quest."

Intuitively, Jiri discovered that he had a special skill for detecting talent, "even if it was hidden or destroyed. I never had many students and pupils, but they all progressed very well." This ability to detect and guide talent became a real specialty of his.

At the North Netherlands Conservatoire he built an impressive cello class in the junior school, giving generously to his pupils. "Take for example my student Anna.[11] She is so extremely talented that I had to adjust my lessons for her. I always adapt to my students' level of talent." Jiri is not only very capable of reflection, strongly enhanced by the techniques he developed to resolve problems with his left hand, but he takes into consideration the personalities of his students and the different ways in which each one learns. "Anna is rhythmically careless. I knew how to deal with that and how to teach her to practise to overcome it. I suggested she write a journal, so that we could discuss how she works and learns. She is fastidious and not easy, but so talented. I really helped her in the process of choosing to make music her profession, because deep down that is what she really wanted to do most."

Jiri is able to let go of students when the time has come. "I know exactly when it has to happen. A moment can come where something important has been established and they know they have to get on. They feel it and then you have to let them go."

Looking back on his career

Music was always central to Jiri's life. "Even today when I am nearly 70 years old, this is the case. It is as important as my family. It has remained my sole hobby as well. When I read, I preferably read about music."

Jiri is satisfied with the fact that he held longstanding lead positions in orchestras and then became a professor at the Conservatoire: "I really showed what I was most capable of." He is the least satisfied with the fact that he tried to attain certain goals while recognizing that "it was not enough. Take for example the importance I gave to being a principal cellist. It was only much later that I discovered the qualities needed to be a really good leader of the cello group. Most of the problems and tensions are due to the fact that you were not 100% safe as a leader. While I did this for nearly twenty years I do not like to look back to that aspect. Others might have done a better job."

Jiri continues to learn both by thinking and doing. "You must be passionate. You always see what still needs doing, as for example when you teach. Sometimes I am very tired. Then I do things to help me relax. Yes, you must be passionate about making music and love it to pieces."

Interviews held May 5 and 11, 2005 in Leeuwarden and Groningen

1 Not to be confused with the definition of 'conservatoire' in most European countries, this being a vocational training institution without higher education status.
2 The capital of the province of Frisia (Netherlands) where the Frysk Orchestra was located.
3 For a string player, the middle finger.
4 Second finger of the hand.
5 In the Netherlands, a music school is an institution where amateur musicians can take instrumental and vocal lessons.
6 Indicates 'music academy' in the Netherlands.
7 A beautiful historic building, which housed the music academy, at present a concert hall in Prague.
8 The two were not family.
9 A Japanese violinist who developed a special method for young musicians.
10 Geza Silvai (violin) and Csaba Silvai (cello), Hungarian born brothers, who now have a practice in Finland, where they teach young violinists and cellists the so-called *Colour String* method.
11 Not her real name.

Horst Rickels

Horst Rickels studied piano construction at the Grotrian-Steinway company in Braunschweig and worked in that function at Bechstein in Berlin. After this he studied music in Kassel where he composed ballet and theatermusic for the Staatstheater. In 1972 he started studying electronic composition at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague. From 1973 he worked as a composer for the theatre group Proloog in Eindhoven. In 1983 Horst Rickels earned his degree in music theory at the Brabants Conservatorium with a thesis on the dialectics of Brecht's texts and Eisler's music. During the next years he formulated new principles for multimedia-theater, resulting a.o. in Van Gogh's 'Laatste Oor' and 'The Simulated Wood'. Supported by a grant Rickels focused his research on the development of sound objects, sound sculptures and sound installations. The central question of his research is how the principle of instability of tuning-systems, pictorial structures and performance practices can be made the central theme of art works. Another important aspect of his research is the study of special qualities of sound in relation to the natural and built environment. As a sound artist Rickels has shown his works in many countries and at international festivals. Often he has participated in projects which aimed at transforming outstanding places into a soundscape, such as 'Fort Klank' in 1994 in which he, together with Dick Raaijmakers and Walter Maioli, transformed an old fortification into a monumental musical instrument. Rickels teaches at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague at the Interfaculty of ArtScience, as well as at the Design Academy in Eindhoven.

For me it is important not to know what I will make tomorrow; important is this bird, sitting there every evening. That image is critical, it should never change.

Growing up after the Second World War influenced Horst Rickels' childhood. Both his parents had lost their spouses during the war. His mother's first husband was shot during the last days of the war, leaving her with a little daughter, and his father came home after the war to find out that his wife had been dead and buried since a few weeks. Horst was born in 1947 in the village of Westerstede, in Northern Germany, near the city of Oldenburg. His stepsister was by then seven years old. "This background has always played a role. My parents were relatively old when I was born. As a child you don't understand. The war was over and it was hardly discussed, neither at home, or at school. Only after a while I heard about teachers who had played a bad role during the war. There were many photos of dead people on the wall, which raised questions to me. I had many grandparents, there was an uncle who returned from captivity in Russia, and slowly I realised what had happened and what role Germany had played."

Childhood

Horst's father worked as a civil servant at a health insurance company; he came from a family of farmers, but because he could learn well he was allowed to make a career outside farming. Horst's mother was an artistic woman, but her mother made her become a tailor as a young girl. She obeyed, but was never happy with it and, according to Horst, she kept making things that were artistic, and not 'normal'. Horst's parents were very musical; his mother played the mandolin, his father the drums, but neither of them ever had formal training.

An important experience for the young boy was the singing of the parents. "Every evening they used to sing together, sometimes it was with the three of them, including the lodger, who lived in our house. I used to lie in bed and listen. It was fantastic. They sang folk music, no classical music." Horst would never join in the singing: "I always had the feeling that this was theirs, but I have always enjoyed listening to it tremendously." Horst felt that his father really tried to go on with his life, but that his mother had a harder time with that.

One of Horst's cousins played the accordion. Whenever Horst visited his grandmother he would hear his cousin play. The flexibility and liveliness of the instrument appealed to Horst: "It made us kids jump on the sofa", and so at the age of seven Horst got accordion lessons. The instrument fascinated the child: "This moving of the accordion, with the air inside it, such an image is enormously important." He is convinced that the basis was laid here for his later fascination with air powered objects.

"At that time there were no music schools. I got a private teacher. He was a war invalid; he had no legs and was sitting in a wheel chair. I was very aurally aware; I would just listen to what he played. When I went home I would take the score, but I just memorised at home what he had played to me. I memorised everything. That went on for years, until at some point his wife discovered that I could not read notes. She made me stay there to learn reading notes. The way she reacted was so humiliating for me, that I stopped playing the accordion. I was about eleven years old by then. The funny thing was also that I had really played all the existing repertoire. After the level I had gained you could only play operetta music, which I hated. It was only later that serious music for accordion was composed. But in the village you would not find such music anyway."

In primary school there was a lot of singing. Horst cannot remember if the children had much joy in singing, but he thinks that it has been important. "It is a pity that singing in schools happens so seldom nowadays. Making music, singing, it is one of the most important things for children, not just for being educated musically, but even in order to grow. It makes your organs grow. I liked singing in primary school. When as a young adolescent I was in grammar school, I became too shy to sing."

After stopping the accordion lessons the accordion was sold. For a while Horst did not make music. He stayed one year longer in primary school, "they found me too playful, but that has not stopped throughout my life." At the age of thirteen he went to grammar school.

"At some point I could borrow a piano of a cousin. I started to play it, by improvising. Later on I would also have some piano lessons of a teacher of primary school, who could play well. I knew Bach from church, but for me that was more connected to the ambiance of the Lutheran church. I was really impressed though by Jacques Loussier, who interpreted Bach with a touch of jazz. Terrible in fact, when you think it over, but I loved it. So that actually made me study Bach. In addition I did some jazz, finding out about chord progressions. I then landed in a Dixieland band with schoolmates. At that time that was very modern. I learned much in this band: ensemble playing, a lot about chords, form and structure, and how that helps you improvising, in short how to move in music without a score. Learning by doing was the only important thing for me there. Reading notes was always very much overestimated, I think. At grammar school we had a marvellous music teacher, but unfortunately he and I used to have conflicts all the time. There was a symphony orchestra in school and this teacher tried to get me in as a double bass player, so I had lessons for a very short while, but then things were turned around: my bass teacher ended up in our band! It was great playing in this band; all of a sudden the world was open."

Horst did not finish grammar school; he was too occupied with music and totally unmotivated to do Latin or mathematics. Because he did not work at all he had to leave school, he wanted both to leave school as well as study music, but that was not possible without a diploma. He was seventeen years old when he stopped. "The school drove me crazy. I was not at all motivated, that came only later. Music came to my rescue."

A piano constructor in Braunschweig

"I decided that I wanted to learn to build organs. But my family advised against it, because the churches became emptier by the week. So then I thought of piano construction, I was very skilful with wood for example. My parents then took me to Braunschweig, to the *Steinweg* factory. I was allowed to enter and I stayed there for three and a half years."

Horst spent a period in each department of the factory, of the mechanics, of intonation and regulation and so on. Once a year he was sent to Ludwigsburg, to a specialized school for piano construction, where he learned special technical things. He was enormously motivated, although at the same time he was certain that he would not want to remain a piano constructor. Horst was very successful and even won prizes, like being acclaimed 'best student piano constructor of Germany'.

The little money Horst earned in the factory and the additional grant he got from his parents was not enough for making a living, so he started making music in a little orchestra consisting of students of the Technical University in Braunschweig. "I played organ and piano, we played on Sunday afternoons and at parties. Actually what we did was pop music, *underground*. But I would also play during fashion shows, and in a nightclub, four times a week, until three o'clock in the night. That was impossible in the end, so then I was on the lookout for something else again. Coming from the countryside it was really thrilling to get to know the big city. The severe hierarchy in the factory was something I did not know. My only frame of reference was the friendliness of the farmers in the region where I came from. So now I got a good idea about social relations and I changed my romantic ideas somewhat."

Horst speaks very highly of his boss, who recognized his musicality and gave him the opportunity to take piano lessons once a week, during working hours. "My teacher was Willy Piel, a well-known concert pianist. I was very lazy, I never practised, but I went there once a week, and then we used to have long conversations about making music, but I never had the feeling that I wanted to become a concert pianist. I think that my boss had in his mind to train me as a pianist so that I might play concerts for the company. Another idea was that I could work as a head of department at the factory, but that did not appeal to me at all. During this time I sort of entered, also through the underground music, the social climate of the sixties. In the end I got very much engaged with social issues. For that reason I also refused military service. I went to Berlin, worked for a half year in the *Bechstein* factory, making grand pianos and meanwhile played jazz music."

Period in Kassel

Horst's girlfriend (and current wife), who had become his girlfriend when he was twelve and she was eleven years old, meanwhile studied Art in Braunschweig, and later on went to Kassel to study Film. Horst followed her to Kassel in 1970. He started composing theatre and ballet music for the *Staatstheater* (State Theatre) and at some point did an entrance examination at the music academy.

"It was a small school, I played badly, but they took me. There were only a few students who had more interests than only their instruments, so I had contact with them. I actually had more contact with visual arts students. They were more open. I tried to find connections to do things together and I was looking for the same in the Staatstheater. I also studied the flute in Kassel. I had been playing flute, clarinet, saxophone, I had all learned that myself. I was looking for a specific, fuzzy sound, *Jethro Tull*-like. But of course that was not permitted, you had to have this 'golden sound', without any additional noises, which I couldn't do, but I was not looking for it either! So you enter a conservatoire, and immediately they prescribe you exactly what to do and how to do it. You have to shut up, otherwise it is no good.

That was not what I wanted. So I looked for an outlet which would enable me to explore other forms of expression, theatre or theatre music, giving me the opportunity to try out things I did not know yet, to experiment. But they continuously wanted me to do things that had already been found out, I could not cope with that. That might be strange, but it is my character. I cannot accept that, that is not what I am looking for."

In Kassel Horst felt at home in the world of the visual arts. "Professors in visual arts were open, they did projects with their students, and I joined in. I was in a band with art students who played well. We did experimental things, for example in the halls where the *Documenta*[1] would take place. I ended up in a total different world. We explored a lot, creating an underground network. In Germany at that time such a *sub culture* was not at all as normal as it was in the Netherlands. I worked in music theatre, in visual arts, I wrote ballet music and electro-acoustic music, and I worked a lot with concepts of texts. I remember at that time we made a piece for ballet. The choreographer wanted to make something about Jesus people. But he did not have a concrete idea. So I delved into the Bible and made a text, aimed at all those Christian sayings that are used in a wrong way. It was quite a radical text. During the premiere we found out that there was censorship. The text was not spoken. We were angry and the Staatstheater went to court. The verdict was that the piece had to be performed twice during an evening, once with text and once without text, so that the audience could make its own choice. This made it clear for me that I couldn't go on in Germany."

Horst had stayed for two years in Kassel, until 1972, and then quit the music academy, actually calling it a 'cultural escape'. In a journal he read an article written by Konrad Boehmer[2], under the title 'Es geht auch anders'. "He described the changes in education in The Hague, which appealed to me. I came to the Netherlands, but it appeared that I still needed a diploma of secondary school to enter into a course of music pedagogy. However, I had brought some compositions, for example with electro-acoustic experiments. Dick Raaijmakers[3] was member of the jury, and he advised me to study electronic music, which I did. I stayed with Dick."

Study in The Hague with Dick Raaijmakers

In The Hague Horst did not feel at his place: "Dick was a methodologist. He would explain the principles of the equipment, and then leave you to yourself. There I was in this room on my own. But I was interested in interaction with people! Now you were supposed to prepare everything and when you had finished that and walked through the procedures your composition was ready. I found that very frustrating; I missed interaction with other musicians. Later that would change; Dick would realize collaborative composing, which would again lead to models of team-

teaching. In addition there were workshops given to students by Gilius van Bergeijk[4], making really crazy pieces, I loved that. And there was an orchestra of the workers choir *Morgenrood*[5] from Rotterdam, led by Louis (Andriessen, RS), which he wrote for; the whole socialist movement in an orchestra, that was a living thing. I told Dick that I was interested in music theatre. 'That is not my thing', he replied, whereas of course he *was* working on that in his installations! So he sent me to Louis, which was not my intention. I did not know Dick's work. He was so modest. I only got to know much later what he was doing. Isn't it strange, to have a teacher who presents his own studio and methodology, but does not show his own achievements, out of fear of influencing you! Only later I saw his music and I realised that this was exactly what I wanted, but apparently he had not understood. This was sheer modesty from his side: 'I am not a composer'. I had lessons in music pedagogy with Boehmer, which I liked, and I had to sing in a choir. But 'having to' is not my thing, now that goes better."

Theatre group Proloog

When Horst was in The Hague for two years he got an offer through Gilius van Bergeijk. Van Bergeijk had been offered a job in Eindhoven, to work as a composer in the political theatre group *Proloog* (Prologue). Due to family reasons he could not take the job and thus offered Horst an introduction. "I had an interview and it clicked immediately, because of my great interest in the relationship between dialectics of music and text in theatre. From one day to the other I went to Eindhoven, I went for one year up and down to The Hague to continue my studies, but in the end I stopped my studies. Meanwhile, in 1974 my wife had graduated in Kassel and she came to live with me in Eindhoven."

In Proloog Horst was both composer and performing musician. He composed songs, was involved in the process from the very beginning; he liked the fact that in Proloog it was not just the interpretation of a play but also making new work together. "We developed plays for youth, for workers in factories, sometimes for the theatre stage, and we often went into the country. We did everything together, a *Gesamtkunstwerk* indeed. Improvisation was hardly at stake, we wrote everything down. We made work for all age categories, sometimes there were five productions running at the same time. We used to take a certain situation as a subject, which we first investigated thoroughly, for example the decline of little shops due to the supermarkets. We used to conduct an investigation and then we expressed in a form of art what a certain situation does with people. In every production a composer, a text writer, a dramaturgist and a producer were involved. The context was always social. We were the very first group in the Netherlands doing this. And all the time, depending how the government was put together, we were more or less threatened with an end to our subsidy, due to our continuous criticism on society."

Horst remained in Proloog until 1979. Then it became too tough for him: "The political and economic side of it became too much. And I was much against this arrogant conception that our task was to make people conscious of how to become revolutionists, the *Baader Meinhof syndrome*. There was less and less focus on the artistic and spiritual side of art. The constant threatening of losing subsidy wore us out. We were always busy with meetings and preparing actions instead of art. We felt like a socialist island, and that makes you blind. We only fought, and our plays became qualitatively less interesting. So I quit."

Studying with Jan van Dijk

Meanwhile it was 1979. Two years before, in 1977 a daughter had been born to Horst and his wife; a son would follow in 1989.

Horst decided that he wanted to study composition, and he addressed himself to Jan van Dijk, a well-known music theorist in the Netherlands. Jan van Dijk advised him to take up the study of Theory of Music in Tilburg, being the conservatoire where he taught at that moment. "I took it up because I wanted to know what is behind the notes, not think about compromising, like in the theatre group. I wanted to investigate, that was important for me and I needed the time for that. The study was tough; I had to read scores, read notes. It resulted in being much longer engaged with writing music than I was used to."

Meanwhile Horst worked as a freelancer, tuning pianos and writing music. He was registered as a composer, but he got no work offered. That is the reason why he was allowed to continue studies. He coped: "the funny thing is, when you really want it, it works."

Horst feels he has learned a lot from this study, although he found it extremely tough. "I was good at analysis, but I worked on it exhaustively, I hardly survived it. 'What is under the notes', I asked myself, 'how do I reach the core and the spiritual layer beyond the notes?' It can bring you in another world, but you must be aware that you have to be able to return. When I had to do my final examination, I was in a small room, having been given a fugue theme. I had quickly determined its structure. But nevertheless I felt quite a pressure. I heard a piano and an accordion playing, an orchestra rehearsing… I wrote this fugue, handed it in and added that I would not return. I was completely finished, totally upset. It really was too much; I had kept hanging too much in it. After the summer holiday Jan called me. I told him that I had learned enough and that I would not return to complete my examinations. But he was both persistent and supportive, resulting in my completing the examination half a year later, in 1983. I am grateful to him for that. Of course I knew that I would not be a music theoretician. But it was important for my self confidence to finish it."

During his study in Tilburg Horst had been initiating a lot of other things. He was member of the first improvising saxophone quartet in the Netherlands, *The Four*

Winds, which performed a lot and won prizes. The quartet made its own compositions, and started to play with other musicians, for example from the free jazz. Playing in this ensemble was a 'necessary counterpart' to the music theory study.

Horst's most important teachers: Jan van Dijk and Dick Raaijmakers
"Jan made my study incredibly inspiring. His showing of important issues in music felt as some kind of initiation. That goes especially for Bach. It was secular and spiritual at the same time. He kept pointing to the technique and at the same time saying what was behind it, what it is about, and what you actually use this technique for. Looking back, he and Dick were the most important teachers for me. I did not appreciate Jan so much as a composer. But his vision on analysis, his revelation of what music actually encompasses was important for me. In Dick's case the broadening of the musical idiom was important, his fresh way of looking at music. Jan showed me everything through analysis, through the music itself. He mostly had a story about all the music we analysed. Most of the times we went to the pub in the afternoon and after two glasses of *slibowitz* the stories came and then the meaning of many things came to the surface. He was an intellectual; he also was a (good) freemason. He would never mention it, but you would sense it. He had an enormous tolerance in accepting different religions, people and directions. That impressed me. It was some kind of humanistic radicalism. Jan was a kind of father figure for me, while I was searching for things; you just felt he wanted to teach you something. Dick on the other hand, was also a kind of father for me. Different, but you felt it was mutual. I admired Dick for his non-straight answers. I often had an opinion and he would not immediately give his counter opinion on this. He could tell you something about it in a Zen-like way and you would take that home, to think it over. I liked that. He is younger and more radical than you would think, being a father figure who is not balanced and quiet. Dick always comes with surprises. On the one hand he can be enormously insolent in the way he dares to do things, and on the other hand he is an incredible gentle and dedicated human being, modest, well directed, never in the foreground, always knowing. Not an artist who wants to expose himself all the time. I still find that inspiring. It took me quite a while to find my path as a composer, but in this searching process these two persons were completely complementary for me." Looking back Horst realises that throughout his development as a composer he was well aware what he needed: "it is nearly sleepwalking, it is impossible to plan".

From the eighties on, achieving concepts
Horst became member of different composing and improvising ensembles, like *Der Junge Hund* (The Young Dog), the Maciunas Ensemble, and made multimedia performances. 'Der Junge Hund' was about making music spontaneously, short and

powerful, with a lot of enthusiastic musicians who could not read a single note, being the counterpart of thinking and making music in a conceptual way. "Just do it – Bang! That, apparently, was necessary."

Horst started teaching in a secondary school and also he taught in the music school in Waalwijk a theoretical course for pupils who wanted to prepare for a study at the conservatoire. He liked working with motivated pupils.

Meanwhile Horst found a couple of organ pipes and a new world opened up.

> Somebody told me that he had found some organ pipes at a scrap dealer, and he wondered if I could do something with them. So I went there and I assembled some pipes. I had recorded sounds and experimented with electronic means during my time at *Proloog*, and now I wondered what other ways of sound would be possible to achieve through a mechanical way.
>
> I experimented enormously with these organ pipes. I made little objects that were played in a concert, so a kind of laboratory of organ pipes that were driven in different ways, and gradually something developed out of it, which could generate a total different sound world, dependent on the air pressure and on the amplification of what was happening in the labium. I put this little laboratory on the stage and I played with that. But there was no keyboard, anything but a keyboard. It was not my idea that one should be able to recognise the old organ, a keyboard is of course synonym to temporized tuning, in any case a described tuning, and I did not want that. I wanted to investigate how sound producing objects behave in any case, without anything being regulated beforehand. In other words, asking the organ pipe what it can tell me. What do you want to do and what can you do? I made investigations using different air pressure, and different compressors. That was driven as follows: there was a scaffolding of organ pipes, below that were some other pipes and a kind of cupboard. Air was being blown in this cupboard by means of a ventilator, and I could control the speed of this ventilator by my foot. I could remove an organ pipe of the installation or leave it on it, and with a small microphone for the labium I could amplify those very soft sounds which you hear when using a low air pressure. So actually I did everything which an organ builder wants to eliminate, there is a quality in that… which asks for composing in a different way. You discover something and you try to give it shape, and it becomes partly a musical form, but independent of the velocity. As a player you were meant to walk around this apparatus and play it from all sides. The principle that became gradually clear was the principle of the instability of sound production. How can you cultivate that principle, and how can you get it into

a shape, in a musical and composing sense and in the context of a performance? How about space: is the audience around it or sitting in front of it, is it participating or not? Those questions are critical: you let go of the divide between composer, instrument builder, performer and audience and you look at the total basis of all of it. How is it and why is it as it is? Everything starts in the end with the sound producing material. From that moment on I tried to reach different levels of music-making. It is both about theory and practice of music. I reflected about it: what is happening? Out of it came a number of big installations, where for instance people can walk through. You give your audience something as a composer, and the audience makes the composition perfect by choosing where they will walk. Every installation has had another guideline. I was not always clear about that guideline, sometimes I was clear; sometimes I had kind of an image, but was surprised about the result.

It is always about the relationship between generating the sound and directing the sound. There can also be installations that function as sculptures. Take for example *The Forest Hermaphrodite*, consisting of an ensemble of eleven high organ pipes, standing head down, so with the labium on top. The air is blown into it through a central divider and those organ pipes are standing vertically on a metal plate. Normally these organ pipes are closed or open. The closed organ pipe is a male organ pipe, sounding an octave lower; the open organ pipe is the female one and sounding an octave higher. How can you make a hermaphrodite of them? By letting them turn over. So I built a mechanism with a little rod fastened at the backside of the organ pipe, with a small 'delaying' motor and that little motor slowly pulls the organ pipe clean, for a little while out of balance and then the upper partial changes, becoming a total different kind of organ pipe. The whole ensemble starts to turn over, very slowly. Sometimes it stands still and then there is another sound again, so it is a sound of very low interferences and shifts, and of course of sometimes very strange upper partials, constantly moving. Every pipe moves a bit differently, because it is driven by another computer switch. So this ensemble is not dependent on whether people move in it or not, but of the destabilisation of a fixed type of organ pipe. There is also another thought behind this, concerning the male and female and of course it is about the sculptural, the movement and the sound it produces. It is a sound you have to take your time for, in order to realise what happens. You have to enter the sound.

I do not work only with organ pipes; I also work with strings and with bells. I made about 35 different installations, often related to a certain space. I made an installation on bells, *Virgo*, in a gallery in Cologne. I also made an installation with tarnished organ pipes, called *Mercurius*. The planet

> Mercurius turns around the sun and is very changeable. Sometimes the titles I choose have to do with my character, that is recognisable. The installation in Cologne was based on two spaces and the connection between those two. The first space in the gallery was totally white. There were two symmetrical chimes that normally are being used on factory premises for telephones. The chimes were outside the gallery and could ring by pressing a button. People pressing the chime heard in the gallery a very shrill sound. In this first space, being totally white, there was nothing else than this ringing chime. You would then pass a kind of connecting space and open the door to the next space, which would be completely black. Complete darkness. It was a big space, but you would not see that. In the distance you would see two red rays of light and you heard a *sinus like* sound. You then would try to reach the two rays of light as a kind of beacon, and what you would hear was the sound, that had disappeared at some places completely, and in other places came back, vibrating. So you would not know where the sound came from. The closer you would come to the two sources of light the more you could see in the end, but the change of sound would continue. Once you would arrive at the two sources of light you would see more and more and after a while you would see that it were actually two bells, standing about one decimetre above the floor, and from under the bells a red glow would surface. When you would put your hand on the bells you would feel the bells vibrate. Two identical bells with a switch of 3 to 4 Herz, being hit by an 'exitator', hitting with a frequency which makes the bell sound by itself. That is why the installation was called *Virgo*; it is asked to sound through itself. Very few energy is needed to elicit the fundamental from the bell, which sound is so thin that it is kind of floating through the space; it is nearly a sinus tone, the tone stands in the space. So it is the contrast between the white room with the noise and the dark room, where you are searching. A room with 'night consciousness', in which you listen in a different way, everything you do not understand has to be felt.

Horst realizes his concepts through combinations of the spaces he encounters, the people he meets and the material he works with. "Often the material itself will tell me. I sometimes first have the material and then I suddenly see the ideal space." Another important issue is of course what drives him at that moment and what he considers important to show. "I never think: 'I have to do this or that because it has not yet happened.' But on the other hand sometimes I see something and then I think: 'that is okay, now I don't have to do that anymore'. When I regard something as not yet existing, but necessary, then I will do it. So things develop from an inner urge."

Horst finds it important that people who give him commissions leave him free to carry it out his own way. "If I do not feel that someone really wants it, I'd rather not

join. It must fit. I am happy with a commission. I do a lot, sometimes too much, both nationally and internationally. I don't know why; perhaps because I am afraid that otherwise I will stand still."

Working as a teacher: Royal Conservatoire and Design Academy in Eindhoven
Since 1993 Horst works as a teacher in the department of ArtScience, the interfaculty of Music and Visual Arts of the Royal Conservatoire and the Royal Academy of Visual Arts and Design in The Hague. He teaches amongst other things a course called 'Ear Cleaning', which he describes as a kind of solfège, but not necessarily in a musical sense. "It is about the question 'what lies behind the sound, what kind of an image can you make when you hear something'. Hearing intervals is much more abstract. What is expressed in the sounds around you? I have the feeling we are losing more and more the sense of that. I am endlessly interested in that question."

Horst feels that he learns a lot from working with his students. "I learn in the first place that I don't have the answers. You think you know a lot, which is not true. I learn much through the direction of my students' questions. Asking questions is fundamental. I think that the way I teach has a lot to do with my previous experiences of how I perceived my tuition. There was no room whatever for individuals while that is critical in arts education. I want to find out, to know and feel where my student is heading to. You have to put aside your own needs and preferences. That seems the only road to me. I don't mean some kind of egoism, but to accompany someone in his or her autonomous process. I try to combine that with collective projects, in which you can do your own thing, which you have to explain to each other, and in which you learn that you need help of the others to go your own pathway." Horst describes his work at the Design Academy in Eindhoven as comparable.

The central role of an artist
"I learned the most as an artist by doing things without knowing where they will end, without knowing how people will react, and also by working in very different circumstances: I worked in galleries, in festivals, but I also made work for miners, I worked in mines. I learned in prestigious festivals but also in the absolute underground, in the mud, so to speak. We are now in a situation where artists mainly function for a certain public. But I think that as an artist you need reactions of people, it is not about a certain audience, although of course you can take that into account. It can be an important question for whom I make my art, does it make sense, do I have something in my core which is a motivation to do those things? That must be fed by what you learn. At some point for example, I did not feel like functioning on jazz stages anymore, feeling that I knew that audience enough. I need challenge, I need growth in different fields. That is why I am currently leading

a shanty choir.[6] We find original songs, orally delivered, which we perform with the choir. It made me sing again. You discover what is the closest to you, your voice. You carry it with you, and discover that it needs not to be *Big Art* to enjoy it. I see it with the singers in the choir; there are so many layers to detect."

To Horst teaching is artistry. Horst finds the profession of arts teaching enormously underestimated; he considers it as an outlet for artistic needs. "You have to share what you feel, something interhuman, inspiration."

The current situation of the arts in the Netherlands

"I keep wondering if we are losing something. Are we losing feeling, because we don't have time for it anymore? How far are the things lying behind the music still to be found in the sound? That keeps me thinking. The visual world is incredibly rich at present, but how about the aural world…are we getting deaf? "

Basically this has to do, according to Horst, with what art really is. "What is art? That is a big question. It is more than an outside, and the inside is probably so intense that we dare not enter anymore. What we are engaged in during the day is so complicated that we do not have the time to listen properly. I am only a short term pessimist. I think it will become worse, and that people will become deaf, but then things will turn around again, like you always see those kind of waves."

The present time is difficult for artists, Horst finds. "Always the question is there if it will attract loads of people and then 'how can I realize my intrinsic values of art and still attract a large audience'. I do not need an *elitist* audience, but I still don't want to make any concessions to my level of art. I think I might have different layers in my art, which makes the public experience different things.

Things are changing in the Netherlands; there is an enormous offering, but also a lot of amusement. I am afraid that we are losing something unique and essential. Twenty years ago there was much more spiritual space in the Netherlands; the country was open and liberal, in contrast to Germany. That is changing."

Today and tomorrow

Currently Horst works on a project in Koog aan de Zaan together with a sculptor, an architect and a writer. He works on sound design; bending the sound of the highway for people living there into sound that amazes them, instead of tiring them. He likes the cooperation with the other artists: "You must keep in mind what you share, namely to make something fantastic for the inhabitants, what they want and what they will start to love, what will become their thing. Last week I put a lot of time in it, tubes had to be installed. Could you imagine, I am a composer!"

"What I would like to achieve is making music as a bird on the roof of a house. The bird won't lose it. That feels like a dream to realize. If things don't work, through all the subsidy stopping and the bureaucracy, you find a place to realize yourself, like

that bird. That is my hold for the future. Not to let myself feel dependent on this or that. I know I can make a step back; I have done that more than once. I am satisfied about my sleepwalking, meaning you cannot direct everything, and that still it can work out well. I have the feeling that until now I have been searching for something which I could not exactly describe, but if you stick to that attitude, you are rewarded. For me it is important not to know what I will make tomorrow, important is this bird, sitting there every evening. That image is critical, it should never change."

Interview held January 26, 2006 in The Hague

1 Documenta in Kassel is a famous annual exposition of contemporary art.
2 Head of the Department of Sonology at the Royal Conservatoire, The Hague.
3 Well-known Dutch composer of electronic music.
4 Dutch composer, also working at the Royal Conservatoire.
5 Aurora, red morning sky.
6 Shanty; songs of labour of seamen.

Floor van Zutphen

Floor van Zutphen was born in a very musical and creative family. After grammar school she read Sociology at Amsterdam University and over the years she became a very successful singer. For many years she was a singer in the Houseband; she also sang in the band of the well-known Dutch performer Herman Brood and in the eighties, after a successful participation in the Knokke Songfestival, she started her solo career. Floor van Zutphen has been teaching at the Cabaret Academy in Amsterdam since 1987 and in 1989 she became a vocal teacher in the Jazz department of the Prince Claus Conservatoire in Groningen. A number of her students became very successful professional singers. Floor has always had a very multi-faceted career.

Right now I look back on a life full of fun and happiness.

Born in Amsterdam in 1948, Floor van Zutphen spent a childhood filled with music, even if she had to grow up rather quickly. She was the oldest child in a family with three children, a sister two years younger than she and a brother nine years younger. Her father was a pianist and both siblings became professional musicians as well. Her mother died at the age of 47, when Floor was 17 years old.

Childhood

"My mother was ill very often. She had been active in the resistance during the Second World War. During the war her parental home in the Zaanstreek[1] was even blown up by the Germans, out of vengeance. In that period my mother was involved in a literary magazine, called 'Zaans Groen', it was more or less an underground magazine. There were articles in it about literature and my mother wrote poems which she published in the magazine. She sang very well, she was a very artistic woman. Just after my sister was born my mother got tuberculosis; she was infected while working as a volunteer in the hospital, where she worked with people who had come back from concentration camps. She went to a sanatorium for two years. During that time I lived with an aunt and uncle, and my little baby sister lived with my grandparents. When my mother was cured and had come home, an epidemic of whooping cough was breaking out, and people had to be vaccinated with a substance that was somehow made out of an extract derived from monkey's glands. Our doctor was very much against this animal abuse and said that vaccination was not necessary. So we children got the whooping cough, and my mother got tuberculosis again, and again she was away from home for two years. This time a young woman came to our house to take care of us. I can't remember whether it bothered me, but I do know it bothered my sister. When my mother had

been cured again from tuberculosis, she got a brain tumour. This was in 1956; I was only eight years old then. She was operated and as a result became paralysed on one side of her face. This was a drama; my mother had been a very good-looking woman, so it was a terrible blow. But later on my little brother was born, which was wonderful, everybody was so happy. He died eight years ago, in 1997, while he was hiking in Vietnam with a friend; he suddenly got a heart attack, he was forty years old."

Floor's father was a professional pianist. He had a private practice in Amsterdam, and later in life he taught at the municipal music school in Amstelveen, in order to have greater social security. He wrote methods for piano and published articles about music, especially ethnic music in the Netherlands. "We never had any money, we were really poor. But we were definitely *bohemians*. The environment I lived in was very artistically nurtured. All kinds of artist were around all the time and everybody was poor, so poverty was not an issue."

Floor thinks there was warmth in the family, although she cannot remember any specific details. "I know that my father loved me very much. I don't remember much about my mother, I think I have pushed that away, though of course I remember that she died. But I did my things, I went to school and I had my friends. I always cooked dinner, I did this for years. When my mother died I was in grammar school. It was terrible. When she died both my sister and I had to repeat a year at school."

Music in the family

There was a lot of singing at home. "My father used to sit at the piano and we sang songs. He loved Duke Ellington and the *blues* and I became crazy about it too. At a very young age I got to know Ella Fitzgerald. We sang as a family, I sang together with my sister two-part songs and I always heard music coming from my father's studio. Or he listened with us to records, and when he had a drink with that it became even cosier."

Music at primary school was not spectacular. The class sometimes sang songs, and that was it. When Floor was eight years old she took piano lessons. First her father taught her and her sister and when they did not accept their father as a teacher anymore, they got another one. "I cannot remember her name, but she used to come to our house and I found it utterly boring. So much so that I actually liked my father's lessons better. Fortunately my father had written a few nice methods, from which we could play. I also played piano four hands with my sister."

Floor has been singing all her life. Actual singing lessons she only got very much later when she was already an adult. "I could not take singing lessons before, because I was much too busy. I don't want it to sound pathetic, but it is a fact that I

always had to take care of the family, because my mother was ill so often. We all had tasks, but my father was quite *weltfremd*. He was a lovely man, very erudite, knew everything about philosophy and literature, but he always said 'I suppose you'll have to educate me.'"

Years at grammar school and acting

In 1960 Floor went to the Vossius Gymnasium in Amsterdam. She liked school and did her homework dutifully. She also liked music in school. Together with the music teacher, composer Bernard van Beurden, the pupils performed a lot of contemporary music.

In grammar school Floor started acting. She liked it very much. "We performed a lot of plays in school, we even did Greek tragedies. I often got the leading part because I was very good at pronouncing the metre. I had great roles." Unsurprisingly, Floor considered becoming an actress during these years. She combined her final year at grammar school with a preparatory year for the theatre school. The system was such that a student would be admitted to the theatre school when this preparatory year had developed in a satisfactory way.

In 1967 Floor's mother died of cancer, 47 years old, leaving behind a family of which the oldest child, Floor, was 17 years old. In 1968 Floor graduated from grammar school.

Years at Amsterdam University and singing

Floor had done her preparatory year for theatre school very well and was admitted to the first year. Nevertheless she decided not to take up acting. She had not enjoyed the preparatory year too much. "For me it was too old fashioned and sleep-inducing."[2] She tried to get a scholarship for a theatre school in London, but in vain. Instead of pursuing her ambitions for the theatre she went to Amsterdam University to read Sociology. She cannot really remember the reasons for this. "It was mainly because of my friends who all started to study at university. I had to do *something*. It was also the time of the big students' actions, and I discovered that I found that very exciting, action!" She continued living at home, because the family needed her to take care of them. Floor would study for seven more years, until 1975, and later on she studied for a few more years. She never graduated, being already too busy with music.

Floor started singing more and more. In grammar school she already had her first band. It just happened. "That is a recurring thing in my life… I was asked by someone to sing in a band and I have always been very polite, so I said, 'of course, why not?' It would never occur to me to say 'no' to anything. And so I rolled from one band into another and gradually became a member of better and better bands."

She did many different things: "First a bit of rock & roll, a lot of gigs at students' parties, singing every Saturday in the 'Brakke Grond'[3] and in many other places. I did a lot of *covers*. I sang the Everly Brothers in a duo with Piet Visser. And then at some point I sang in a band, called *Sleezy Pete and his Teddy Bears*, *featuring Florence Dynamite*. This band had a guitarist who also played in the Paradiso *Houseband*. I became a member of this Houseband as well, in 1973. We played in *Paradiso*[4] and we rehearsed in the cellar. We always performed on Fridays during a programme of the Dutch Broadcast[5] in Bellevue Theatre, doing all kinds of songs."

Meanwhile Floor had met Thijs, the man she would live with for 35 years, until he died two years ago. "When I met him I was 21 and he was 20. He played the piano excellently. In fact he played it so well that since I met him I have not touched the piano anymore and really started singing. I met him at a party, he read Economics, which he never finished because it did not suit him at all. Once he came to collect me from my home and did not feel too well. So I offered him to lie down and he never left again. He stayed in our house for half a year. My father did not object; he was always fine with everything. I felt very responsible for my home situation, even when I took part in this exciting students' action in 1968; I was one of the occupants of the *Maagdenhuis*.[6] And meanwhile I went home to cook for an uncle and an aunt who were coming for dinner. When I came back I was arrested and the police took my fingerprints and a photo."

Floor and Thijs started to live together quite soon, Thijs preferred not to live with Floor's family. It was an extremely busy time for Floor: "I kept going to my father's house, to clean and take care of the laundry, and of course I felt quite guilty. I studied and I had my bands, my life was really busy. I am a very dutiful person, so I did not neglect my study either." Thijs became a photographer and started to work as a free lancer.

Floor's father died in 1990, 68 years old. "He was a very strong man, but I think that one day he simply thought 'enough is enough'. It is strange; everyone in my family is now dead, except for my sister. We sometimes joke about it; when we introduce each other we say: 'This is my family member.'"

Further development of career

In the seventies Floor's career as a singer developed further. The Houseband, the first *funkband* in the Netherlands, was very successful and very popular and scored several hits. The band performed a lot in the popular television programme *Toppop* and at a certain point Floor was proclaimed 'most promising singer' by the magazine 'Oor' (Ear, RS).

"Making music my profession simply had to be; it just happened. My brother Jan played the double bass, but he was actually professionally engaged in records, *house* and *dance* music; he had a label with Roxy[7]. My sister Marjan studied

classroom music teacher training and now teaches at the music school in Amsterdam."

In 1975 Floor quit her study in sociology; she was far too busy with her music. During the eighties she would try to take up her studies again, but without much success. Life had become all about music. In the latter half of the seventies Floor sang in the band of famous pop artist Herman Brood, *Herman Brood & his Wild Romance*. Floor enjoyed it tremendously; it was a highlight for her. "It was really super fun, there was so much energy. That also had to do with Herman's drug use of course, but okay. I learned that success and presentation on stage have everything to do with energy."

In the beginning of the eighties Floor tried to start a solo career. "In some ways it was successful, but in other ways it was not. I had a lot of competition." This was also the time Floor took an agent. She took the initiative to start a solo career, because she thought it was time for her to leave the Houseband. "We had a song which was a solo number for me. It was called 'Don't lose your love', I sang it and it immediately became a hit. Actually, the rest of the band couldn't stand it. They did start to promote it, with my help, but they didn't pay me for it, because they were the songwriters. I didn't like that, so I quit. I then tried to make my first solo album; I knew a Canadian producer who had contacts with a recording company and that is how things went. It was so expensive; it cost 100.000 guilders at the time!"

Floor's first solo album, called *First Floor*, appeared in 1979. "It sold relatively well, and I got a lot of publicity, but it did not become a real big success. I don't know why, maybe I did not keep enough control of it myself." She is a modest person, "modest, and even a bit shy. I find modesty neat and I still have that in me. I find it very hard to say 'look at me'! It does not bother me, I know what I am worth, and I don't care what other people think. Maybe I don't have enough ambition, but I am quite satisfied. I have sufficient self-esteem not to depend on other people's opinions."

In 1982 Floor took part in the song festival of Knokke in Belgium[8], together with the singers Soesja Citroen and Simone Kleinsma. The team won second prize, which led to an offer for the recording of Floor's second solo album, which appeared in 1983. In 1983 Floor was invited for the festival again, but because she was 35 by then, according to the regulations of the festival she was too old. She was then offered the opportunity to produce the festival, which she accepted and enjoyed tremendously. "I invited singers like Mathilde Santing and Astrid Seriese. The big band of Belgium Broadcasting was involved, as well as Vara's Dance Orchestra from the Netherlands and the Metropole Orchestra. Once again, and again the year after that, we ended first."

After two years unfortunately the VARA[9] withdrew from the Knokke Song festival, due to financial reasons. Floor was then asked by the VARA to become the producer of their dance orchestra. She did this for a year, and then the orchestra

was disbanded. "I could have had a career in producing, but other things presented themselves that I said yes to."

Halfway the eighties the band *Girls Talk* crossed Floor's path, a group consisting of three singers, one of them Floor and the others Astrid Seriese and José Koning. Later Denise Jannah and Lydia van Dam also joined. They performed for nearly ten years, both in the Netherlands and abroad. "It was a good band, with very good musicians."

A highlight in Floor's career was a music theatre production in 1985, called *The Good, The Bad and The Fat*, with singer Astrid Seriese and director Margrith Vrenegoor. Floor had to sing and act and it was an experience that taught her a lot. Another theatre performance she worked on with great satisfaction was *Wuthering Heights,* also directed by Margrith Vrenegoor, in which she musically performed with a trumpet player and a cellist. Floor regards Margrith Vrenegoor as someone she learned a lot from.

Singing lessons

Floor never went to a conservatoire, for the simple reason that at that time there was no existing study for jazz or popular music. The first time she took private singing lessons was in 1973, when she was 25 years old. She took lessons with Bep Ochterop. "She was a well-known pedagogue, and used to teach several popular singers. But I must say that I did not learn too much. Of course I could sing, I just did it, I had good examples." But a few years later Floor really got problems with her voice, feeling she had to force it too often ("I thought that maybe I shouted too much") and then she started working seriously on that matter.

Floor also took lessons with Paolina ten Cate, whom she met through a speech therapist, which she consulted for the problems with her voice. The lessons were extremely helpful; Floor remained with her for two years, doing a lot of exercises. "Paolina really provided me with a basis. I learned a new and more modern kind of singing. It was sort of Barbra Streisand-like, with a bit of *twang*[10]. Only later did I realise how well she had taught me. Some things did not yet happen during my lessons; it took me quite some time to incorporate it. I had been pushing myself in my singing, because of the pop music, and there were no monitors at that time that enabled me to hear myself. I taught myself to force my voice, and I really had to learn to sing differently."

Later on Floor also took lessons with opera singer Marianne Blok. "I heard her sing at the opera, she sang like an angel." But Marianne did not turn out to be the right pedagogue for Floor, having a very different kind of voice. The last teacher Floor had was Mildred Aikema, and she again was a very good teacher. She was not a jazz singer but gave good advice concerning the technique for Floor's voice.

Shift in genres

Floor feels that because of her experiences at home with jazz, she has always been a 'jazz-like' singer, also in pop groups. "You will always recognise me when I sing, it is also because I like the jazz sound the most. Jazz is by far the most interesting genre I occupy myself with, not by all means the most fun one. Floor recounts the journey to India which she recently made, with a number of *house deejays*. "I went with a deejay who used to be a friend of my brother (my brother was a deejay as well); we actually went with a whole group of deejays. We stayed in Bombay, at MTV. If you listen well, there are a lot of very interesting things to discover in house music. Genres like *dance* and *house*, computer music have become very important."

Teaching and learning

Teaching became a major part of Floor's career at a later age. In 1987 she started to teach at the Academy of Cabaret in Amsterdam, and she still teaches there. "I have a small job there. I do whatever there is to support or coach in the area of singing. I work sometimes individually, sometimes in groups; I give technique lessons and work on repertoire. I actually feel like a Jack-of-all-trades. At present there is so much talent in this academy, it is very satisfying to work here."

In the eighties Floor also gave workshops in a community house in Amsterdam. The workshops were given under the title 'She is a Singer'. "Famous singers like Rita Reijs and Margriet Eshuis were guest teachers and I was a kind of provider of the basis. I used to do the first three lessons, then the guest teachers came, and finally we would have a presentation. That is how I taught. Just start somewhere."

When the Groningen Conservatoire started a jazz department, Floor was invited to become a teacher, through a colleague she knew from the Vara Dance Orchestra. She accepted the job and developed into a very good and successful teacher. "I can do it; my grandmother was a teacher, my sister is a teacher, my father also taught, and he would even prepare whole school classes around concerts. At my parental home Theo Thijssen[11] was a hero. I always wanted to communicate and transmit something I like myself."

Floor started to work at the Groningen Conservatoire in 1989. She feels that her qualities as a teacher have grown over the years, although: "when I began to teach I knew exactly what I wanted to teach, namely those things I had had to find out for myself. They were mainly technical things, such as singing loud in the higher notes without sounding classical, and while taking care of your voice. Nobody had ever taken me by the hand, because there was no conservatoire where I could study. I had to teach myself what I needed, and that is why I think I know what my students need. I tried to use my image of this ideal lesson. It went well; my students gave me a lot of feedback, and that taught me much. Through my experience I developed into a better teacher. I hear more easily and I hear more than I used to and I can tell my students what to do in order to make things better. In the past I had to search

for that. As a singing teacher you have to *hear* what another person *feels* from inside, how it feels in their body. You are supposed to be able to hear that well. You have to fine-tune this listening: is it open, closed, is it not enough, or too much from the background? The fact that I had many students gave me a lot of experience. Every student arrives in the conservatoire with her own individual baggage, so actually there is no method. One student sings very well in an intuitive way, but does not know at all what she is doing, so you'll have to work in a different way than with a student who cannot yet sing so well, but has a good *swing*, *feel* or *timing*. The angle differs per person. The things you have to watch with every student in a technical sense are breath support, resonance, an open throat and a relaxed jaw. When you do this entire range of technical issues well, you do it okay. But that is easily said! I love teaching; it brings me in the right spirit. And I want my students to leave their lesson happy and energized, because I feel that when they leave the lesson like *that*, they will feel complete and I can be certain they have learned something."

The longer Floor works as a teacher the easier she finds it to hear the potential of a student: "I can hear it after they have sung one single sentence. I immediately hear whether someone is a singer or not. Intonation for instance is important, but more than that is the question, 'is there energy and spirit?' I learn a lot from my students, ranging from 'nerve' to the use of the voice; I have to demonstrate it or try to imitate the student in order to find out what she is doing. And most important of all is that my love for singing is confirmed in every lesson."

Floor makes a distinction between teaching and coaching: "It is the difference between technique and repertoire. You can teach the technique of singing, but a style of singing, and repertoire, needs to be coached. *Timing*, *swing*, *feel*, concern much more individual choices. In jazz it is coaching." Floor appears to be doing very well. Some of her students, like Francien van Tuinen and Izaline Calister won prizes and became national celebrities.

Influences are certainly there. Great musicians Floor learns from are her heroine Aretha Franklin, but also Ella Fitzgerald and the legendary classical singer Kathleen Ferrier. But most influences are more indirect, "like my father, he is a kind of background for me, and the people I met at home in my childhood. The poet Bert Schierbeek was my uncle, the painter Karel Appel came to our house; he was a friend of my parents." I know lots of people from the art world, and also from the world of advertising, through Thijs, which has been very rich for my development. That whole circle is important; actually they were more influential for me than the musicians from my bands."

A woman in a man's world

Music plays a big role in Floor's life; though in her social life artists are important and not especially musicians. She has no great memories of 'the boys of the band'.

"Especially in the first funk band, the atmosphere was so *macho*. This was of course thirty years ago, but at the time it was very difficult to stand your ground as a woman in such an environment. I don't think I went against it, just like I did not go against Herman's (Brood, RS) use of drugs. But I would *not* take drugs myself, period. I was just another being, a female. I went my way independently. I also wrote lyrics for the bands. There was not much respect for my artistic input and that had to do with the fact that I was female *and* a singer as well. Singers and instrumentalists were in different worlds. A guitarist could always make his amplifier sound louder and a drummer could play louder as well, but I always had to depend on my microphone. It was of course important for them that I sang, because I had a pretty face. And perhaps I was not as persistent in my artistic contribution as I could have been. If I wrote a piece I absolutely wanted to perform I found other ways of doing it, through my own album for example. I could not cope with those kind of conflicts, I tried other ways to canalise my artistic flow."

Arts council

Between 1982 and 1988 Floor was a member of the Arts Council and advised on subsidies for the arts. She regards it as a highlight in her career. There were meetings and visits preceding the advice that was given. "I learned another kind of vocabulary there and I learned to see the importance of cross-fertilization between the arts, in fact, that what a painter does, a writer, or a musician, is basically all about the same. I was in that committee because of my background in pop music, I was quite active in the Foundation for Pop Music. I sometimes found it difficult to give advice; for example when I did not know much about a subject. I was, again, the only female member, a girl with a background in popular music. But despite these feelings of ambivalence, I learned a lot."

Life with Thijs

Thijs was very proud of me, he often came to listen, and he was very supportive of me, as I was of him. We really had a happy marriage. We never had children, because we were both free lancers, it was just not possible. I could not plan my life, with tours, playing, the work in the studio. Thijs worked a lot as a photographer for the Memisa Foundation[12] and NOVIB in Africa and sometimes I went with him. I then recorded music and made radio programmes for the VARA. The music and the role it played in people's lives impressed me deeply.

When I was about forty, there came a shift in my career, because I started to perform less and teach more. That was of course age-related, but it was also related to the fact that during that time we rented a house in Antwerp, where we used to spend the weekends. I chose to pass the time with Thijs there instead of taking gigs or doing my networking to get gigs. It was great; it was

our kind of 'summerhouse', in a nice international harbour city near Amsterdam. Wonderful restaurants; a whole culinary world opened up for us. We simply loved it.

And then, nine years ago, Thijs started a restaurant in Amsterdam together with a friend, in the south of the city, near the Concertgebouw. It was called 'Oud Zuid' just like the neighbourhood. We loved it, we had always loved cooking, eating, our social life; I still like going out for dinner. At that time digital photography was emerging, so Thijs had to choose to either invest in it, or to start another life. It became the latter. Thijs was a very enterprising person, we started the restaurant and it became a huge success. But after five years we stopped, because it was simply too much, it was very intense. At the time we sold the restaurant we had 19 employees working for us!"

After the period in the restaurant came to an end in 2003, Floor and Thijs bought an old house in the inner city of Groningen. "We bought it through an auction, without actually having seen it, and Thijs was going to restore it. We got married, because we now had two houses and wanted to be members of both the community in Groningen and that in Amsterdam. We married in Groningen on a Monday morning and our real estate agent was our witness.

But our house was never restored, because two years ago, in the spring, Thijs fell ill. He was ill for six weeks, and then he died. Nine days before his death we were told he had cancer. We had been thinking he might have caught some virus in Africa. It was very unexpected. I still don't know how I am doing actually, I can't bear the spring, and actually I can't talk about it, it is just terrible. Thijs was very sociable; we had a lot of friends and I got to know a great many people through him, and they are still around me.

Artistic choices

Floor's career has always been multi faceted. Recently she was the vocal coach for the musical *The Lion King*. "The musical *The Lion King* is situated in Africa. They (Joop van den Ende Productions, RS) were looking for black singers and strangely enough you do not find those singers in our conservatoires. Black singers are much more into *hiphop* for example. There was an audition and subsequently a little school was formed, with singers, dancers and actors. I provided the singers' training. There were quite a few very good singers. I used to work on the musical on Friday evenings and Saturdays. I coached them for a role, and then they had to do an audition again for that role. When a musical is running for a long time you need a lot of singers who can replace one another."

Floor knows that in such an environment she has to work in a totally different way from in a conservatoire. "Everything has to be taught in one specific way, there is absolutely no room for personal interpretation or improvisation. That is also why you can bring them to deliver on a high level in a relatively short time. They sing a

few songs and they also sing in choirs. They only have to do their 'trick' in a certain way. The musical leader determines the way and gives me CD's to listen to, so I can hear what he wants. In the conservatoire I work on musical identity and personality, here I am not meant to do that. Still, I liked it very much, with all those lovely Surinam youngsters. They are from another world, it sometimes seems, not scared, not pretentious, uninhibited**,** really great."

Floor feels that her artistic choices mainly develop through intuition. "There are a lot of issues I want to sort out for myself, like sound. I don't do that by listening to other singers. I do it by listening to music. And I talk to people. Sometimes you hear your colleague doing things and then suddenly you realise that you are on the same wavelength, it appeals to you. In cases like that you hardly ever have to use words."

Currently Floor is working on a CD with songs written by her colleague Koos Wiltenburg, a double bass player. Saxophonist Don Braden and cellist Jan Ype Nota accompany her. She likes the way she sings on the CD, and feels that it sounds the way she wants to sound, well balanced. For Floor it is important to work with musicians she feels she can trust and who respect her. "My presentation is much better then. If it does not work, then I am inclined to withdraw, rather than fight."

She is satisfied with where she is now as a musician. "That is also in my nature. When I get up I almost always start work in a good mood, I am not easily depressed. I don't know if this is the place I have to be, but I feel okay with it. Especially in teaching I have reached the goals I wanted to reach. I think I am the best teacher in the Netherlands. I don't think I am the best singer in the Netherlands, because there are things I know I am not able to do. I have my personal style as a musician, whatever that is. But it has to do with timing and timbre. I have my own identity as a musician as well."

Perspectives of the profession

Floor is optimistic about the perspectives in the profession for her students. Her graduates all have found work, and there is a lot of demand for singing lessons. She feels that the contents of the profession have changed, also due to the fact that conservatoires have now much more on offer. "The Foundation for Jazz in the Netherlands has meant a lot, as well as The Pop Foundation. There are greater possibilities for subsidies. When I was a member of the arts council it was much harder to get attention for jazz and pop. The attention for other musical cultures has broadened as well, and there are more places to perform. Everyone who wants to, can make a CD. There are of course also genres that avoid subsidized performances, like *dance* or *hiphop.* They are big cultures. A lot is now within reach of young people. On the other hand they should not make the mistake of thinking that stardom comes easily…."

Future

Floor wants to go on teaching as long as possible, and furthermore: "enjoy my singing. Like on my CD. I would also like to do a music theatre performance again, because I love this cross-fertilization. I find it very interesting to see other people in their profession in the arts." She will see how things go, but, "right now I look back on a life full of fun and happiness."

Interview held March 22, 2006 in Groningen

1 The region north of Amsterdam.
2 In the interview Floor referred to the 'Actie Tomaat' (Tomato Action) which occurred only a little bit later in 1968, where actors demanded renewal of the theatre.
3 Theatre stage in Amsterdam.
4 Pop stage in Amsterdam.
5 The programme was called 'VPRO Vrijdag'.
6 The Amsterdam University Office.
7 A disco in Amsterdam.
8 A song festival focusing on singers rather than on songs, for which singers were invited to take part.
9 One of several Dutch broadcastings.
10 Meaning a specific kind of 'flat' and penetrating resonance.
11 A dedicated Dutch primary school teacher who wrote novels that became famous.
12 A foundation for foreign development aid.